

From 'as British as Finchley' to 'no selfish strategic interest':
Thatcher, Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish Relations, 1979-1990

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Abstract

During a parliamentary speech in November, 1981, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said that to her, “Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom; as much as my constituency is”. This statement is commonly paraphrased and quoted as ‘Northern Ireland is a British as Finchley.’ The quote is often used as evidence of Thatcher’s dedication to maintaining the union with Northern Ireland. It is surprising then that in 1990 Peter Brooke, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said in a public speech that the Thatcher Government had “no selfish economic or strategic interest” in Northern Ireland and that should the majority vote for unification, they would consent.

The principal aim of this project is to discover why the Thatcher Government’s attitude towards Northern Ireland changed. It will be dominated by an exploration of how both governments addressed the issue of the perpetual Northern Irish crisis. This study will delve into the personal relationships between the key Anglo-Irish political figures of the decade, namely Thatcher, Charles J. Haughey and Garret FitzGerald. Public interest in Thatcher’s time as Prime Minister was heightened following her death in 2013, the aftermath of which saw re-runs of television documentaries and interviews with her colleagues. Scholarly interest in the period has also grown due to the release of governmental records under the twenty-year and thirty-year rule in London, Dublin and Belfast. Overall, this is a timely study that aims to extract key information from the newly released records in order to explore Anglo-Irish relations between 1979-1990. Existing literature on Thatcher’s premiership is comprehensive. However, a specific study of the attitude of the Thatcher Government towards Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations has yet to be undertaken.

Abbreviations

AG	Attorney General
AIA	Anglo-Irish Agreement
AIIGC	Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEU	Council of Europe
CSJ	Campaign for Social Justice
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECST	European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism
EEC	European Economic Community
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GUBU	Grotesque Unbelievable Bizarre and Unprecedented
ICJP	International Committee for Justice and Peace
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MPA	Member of Parliamentary Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NICRM	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement
NIF	New Ireland Forum
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
No. 10	Number Ten Downing Street
NORAIID	Irish Northern Aid Committee
OD (I)	Cabinet Northern Ireland Sub-Committee
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann

RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
TD	Teachta Dála
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US/USA	United States/United States of America
UUP/OUP	Ulster Unionist Party/Official Unionist Party
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
WW1	World War One
WW2	World War Two

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Introduction

An Unrequited Love Affair? Unionism and Conservatism, 1885-1979

Northern Ireland always tended, sooner or later, to bring out in mainland leaders an opposite set of emotions: of indifference, boredom or the kind of despair which makes all action seem futile.¹

The question of Ireland, and its relationship with the United Kingdom (UK), was from the first Home Rule Bill of 1885 one of the great dividing lines of British politics.² The Conservative party's political dominance in Britain between 1886 and 1906 was inaugurated and arguably entrenched by its stand of defending the 1801 Act of Union. To be a British Conservative was to be Unionist. It was intimately bound up with perceptions of national and strategic interest, popular imperialism and mistrust of the largely catholic electorate of Ireland. Yet, following the creation of the Northern Ireland state in 1921, the sting went out of the Irish question in British domestic politics. The Irish Free State, which was created in 1922, would become almost *Hibernia incognito* while Northern Ireland and its polarized politics was overlooked. Throughout the twentieth century, Conservative policy on the Irish question fluctuated due to the political, social and economic climate in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.³

Research Questions, Contribution to Knowledge, Research Methods, Methodology and Structure of Thesis

This thesis examines the changing nature of British government policy in Northern Ireland during Margaret Thatcher's long term in office. When Thatcher became leader of the Conservative Party she indicated that she would repair relations between the Conservatives

¹ Hugo Young, *One of Us: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Pan, 1993), p. 465.

² Two of the best studies on the history of the Irish issue in British politics are D. George Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics, 1868-1996* (London: Macmillan, 1996) and Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Question in British Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1996). See also Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989). For more on the successive Home Rule crises please see especially Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2003).

³ For an overview of the social, economic and political climate in Ireland see D. George Boyce, *Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2005) and Alvin Jackson, *Ireland: 1798-1998* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

and Unionists. Thatcher claimed to be ‘profoundly Unionist’ yet by the end of her tenure Peter Brooke, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, stated that the British Government had ‘no selfish economic or strategic interest’ in Northern Ireland.⁴ This thesis will consider whether the apparent shift in attitude was reflective of Thatcher’s own views towards the situation in Northern Ireland.

The second theme revolves around wider Anglo-Irish relations. The 1980s proved to be a tumultuous time period. The violence in Northern Ireland increased and spread to mainland UK; politics in the Republic of Ireland proved to be unstable as Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil vied for the Taoiseach’s Office, with Haughey serving as Taoiseach thrice between 1979 and 1992 and FitzGerald twice between 1981 and 1987. How did London view the two Taoiseachs, and did their policies and personalities have an effect on Thatcher? Did they differ in their approach to Anglo-Irish relations, and if so, why? Kilheaney’s work focuses on Thatcher’s involvement in shaping Northern Ireland policy during her time as Prime Minister.⁵ Through her research, Kilheaney discovered that Thatcher was not the autocratic ‘Iron Lady’ most people, and indeed some historians, assume her to be. In regards to Northern Ireland policy, she could be pragmatic. But looking at how policy was discussed and meetings were prepared for by Dublin is pivotal to understanding how Anglo-Irish relations in the 1980s developed. To leave out Dublin completely is to miss half of the story, especially when we arrive at the AIA. Contrariwise, to focus primarily on Dublin, as Kelly did, is to disregard the nuances between Dublin and London.⁶ Part of the analysis of this thesis involves identifying the subtle differences in approach and evaluation between meeting agendas and summations of each government. In doing this, this study offers another layer of analysis which has not been appreciated before. Moore also attempted this in his biographies of Thatcher, but due to the time scale and different issues he covers, he is only

⁴ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 2012), p. 385, Karen Johnston Miller, Duncan McTavish, *Making and Managing Public Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 169. Peter Brooke, Baron Brooke of Sutton Mandeville, Conservative. MP 1977-2001. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1989-1992. Brooke resigned after Gay Byrne, host of RTÉ programme ‘The Late Late Show’ convinced him to sing ‘Oh My Darling, Clementine’ the same day the PIRA had killed seven protestant construction workers. This was deemed highly disrespectful and outraged the Ulster Unionists.

⁵ Kilheaney, ‘Ministers Advise, Prime Minister’s Decide?’

⁶ Stephen Kelly, *‘A Failed Political Entity’: Charles Haughey and the Northern Ireland Question, 1945-1992* (Kildare: Merrion Press, 2016),

able to dedicate one chapter to Northern Ireland in his works.⁷ This means we miss out on key details which better explain how Anglo-Irish relations developed during the 1980s. It is this gap that this thesis attempts to bridge.

Although this thesis focuses primarily on the UK and the Republic of Ireland, the third theme involves looking at other influences on Anglo-Irish relations. This includes a brief look into how the international political arena could shape Thatcher's Irish policy (chapters three and five) and how political scandals could affect relations between Dublin and London (chapters three, six and seven). Throughout the 1980s there were a string of paramilitary attacks on members of the security forces, government officials and the general public (see chapters one, four and seven) which also affected Anglo-Irish relations. In order to understand how key policies were shaped and discussed, this thesis offers a study of the stresses and strains that were placed on the key negotiating figures.

There is also a study of how Anglo-Irish relations continued after the AIA, something previous works have only been able to briefly refer to due to the lack of available documentation. This thesis covers from 1979 to 1990, meaning that this work delves further into Thatcher's Northern Ireland policy than has hitherto been possible. Some political studies, including the works of McGarry and O'Leary, have covered this time period.⁸ However, again for the years preceding the AIA most offer a brief overview of key events without being able to explain what happened behind the scenes. This thesis offers a dedicated study into a contemporary subject, looking in particular at how policy was shaped by the Anglo-Irish political elite.

As this thesis focuses on the Anglo-Irish political elite, it is open to criticism from historians of the 'history from below' tradition.⁹ Although the effects of the decisions of the political elite on the general population in Northern Ireland is discussed at various points

⁷ Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography, Volume One: Not for Turning* (London: Allen Lane, 2013) and *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography: Volume Two: Everything She Wants* (London: Penguin, 2016).

⁸ John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland* (London: Athlone Press, 1992), *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995),

⁹ The lead historian from this movement is Maurice Cowling. See especially Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy, 1933-1940* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977).

throughout this thesis, the focus will remain on Thatcher, Haughey, FitzGerald and their teams. This is simply because of the release of the respective government files from the time period. For the first time, we as historians can closely examine what happened behind the scenes between the British and Irish governments. This therefore contextualises the major events of the 1980s and fully explains how key policies and decisions were reached.

Some may argue that given that this study looks into the events of 30 years ago, it cannot technically be classified as ‘history.’ Barraclough wrote that contemporary history was merely the study of a process, and ‘does not constitute a separate period with distinctive characteristics of its own.’¹⁰ To exclude the 1980s from the wider story of the Northern Ireland peace process would take away one of the founding blocks of Anglo-Irish relations. Although fall-outs between Thatcher and either Haughey or FitzGerald were numerous, it cannot be denied that significant progress was made between Dublin and London in the eleven years that Thatcher was Prime Minister. Aside from this, understanding more about how Anglo-Irish relations developed in the 1980s gives us the opportunity to discover how diplomacy between two countries with opposing views can develop, a useful lesson in any era.

The main inspiration behind this project stems from the 2013 ruling that documents held within the National Archives in London from the 1980s were to be released under a new twenty-year rule. For the first time, the Thatcher government papers, also known as the Prime Minister’s Office Files (PREM) were available to study. Thatcher also passed away in 2013 which sparked interest in her time as Prime Minister from both members of the public, via media interviews with her colleagues and television documentaries. Those who contributed to Jackson and Saunders’ edited essay collection as well as Kelly, Kilheaney and Moore, were able to make some use of these files releases and those published online by The Margaret Thatcher Foundation.¹¹ As aforementioned, these works are focused on either Dublin or London politics, and were unable to go in to detail about Anglo-Irish relations post 1985. Because this work was completed in 2018, I was able to access PREM files dating

¹⁰ Geoffrey Barraclough, *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967). See also Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997) for more on the limitations of studying the political elite.

¹¹ Robert Saunders and Ben Jackson (eds.), *Making Thatcher’s Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

from 1979 to 1990. I was also able to collect files from the Cabinet Office (CAB), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Northern Ireland Office (CJ4), however due to the limited time allowed to complete this PhD, I decided to focus on the PREM files as these contained the most information on the inner-workings of Thatcher and her team.

The government of the Republic of Ireland did not adopt a twenty-year rule, but there were still documents released from 1979 to 1987 under the thirty-year rule. I therefore collected files from both the Department of the Taoiseach (TAOIS) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). I also collected some files from the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, however I found these to be largely in line with what I had found within the CJ4 files. The documents I studied from each repository varied from telegrams, memorandums, briefings, official letters and summaries.

One of the more fascinating aspects of the PREM files was that Thatcher was a detailed note taker. A lot of the unique findings contained within this thesis are taken from these handwritten notes. Thatcher used different lines to express her appreciation of a memo. According to Charles Powell, who deciphered the meanings behind the different styles during an interview for the 1993 documentary series, 'The Downing Street Years'; A wavy underline meant 'this is absolute rubbish'; A single underline meant that Thatcher would commit that fact/statement to memory; A double underline meant 'I agree'; Finally, a rare triple underline, which was often accompanied by a short notation in the margin and extra ticks, meant 'Bulls eye!' I will indicate if the underlines contained within this thesis are present on the original document.

While I was collecting files from Belfast, Dublin and London I noted that entire files, particularly from the 1986-1989 period, had been withheld from release. There were also some documents from within the released files which had been entirely or partially redacted. This is due to international security concerns as some of the information must have been sensitive. It is also partly due to the fact that some of the figures from the time period, for example John Hume, are still alive. I therefore decided to complete several freedom of information (FOI) requests from the Cabinet Office to try to access some of the withheld

information from 1986-1990. Before I submitted the requests, I sought advice from Chris Collins, the Director of the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, on how best to word these requests. Chris had experience with submitting FOIs and was able to guide me. In the end, I only succeeded in one request; to access documents that covered meetings between the British and Irish Foreign Secretaries regarding Anglo-Irish relations, and I had to cease my requests because the Cabinet Office informed me that they had become ‘vexatious’ But I was able to use FOI 0231-17 in the later chapters of this work.

I also wanted to further understand how Thatcher behaved after the AIA. In order to achieve this, I decided to try to contact Tom King and Peter Brooke, Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland from 1985-1989 and 1989-1992 respectively. I was only able to contact Mr. King as Mr. Brooke had retired from the House of Lords in 2015. Mr. King was happy to correspond with me via email, and his responses to several of my questions are contained within this thesis.

The following chapters will follow a chronological narrative. The reason for this is to ensure that the vast collection of primary resources are used to their full advantage. Government files are grouped together by subject, for example the Prime Minister’s Office Files which are used here were contained within the ‘Ireland’ series. The individual documents are then kept in chronological order. Using this method also emphasises how issues between Dublin and London escalated over time. For example, we can see how Thatcher’s reservation towards the Anglo-Irish talks culminated in the ‘out out out’ burst of 1984 (chapter four). There are slight overlaps between the time periods covered in chapters one and six, but this is due to the major events these chapters cover. This thesis covers three stages in Thatcher’s Northern Ireland policy; from engagement between 1979-1984; estrangement between 1985-1986; and finally, disengagement between 1987-1990. Such a comprehensive study of Thatcher’s Northern Ireland policy has not been undertaken before. It is this gap in historiography that this thesis seeks to fill.

In order to better understand the Thatcher Government's attitude to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the remainder of this introduction will outline the history of the Conservative-Unionist dynamic from 1885 to 1979.¹² Due to the long time-scale covered, and to fully understand how relations developed over time, the introduction will follow a chronological narrative style. Key incidents will be analyzed alongside the actions of important political figures of the period. This will begin with the Home Rule crises of the late nineteenth century.

The 1880s were a period of tremendous agrarian unrest in Ireland. William Ewart Gladstone, Liberal Prime Minister, in the face of the Land War and the electoral success of Charles Stewart Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party, by 1885 came to the conclusion that the only solution to the Irish problem was Home Rule.¹³ The First Home Rule Bill of 1886 was defeated in the House of Commons. Gladstone tried to introduce a Second Bill in 1893 and this did pass the vote in the Commons. However, it was defeated by the Conservative majority in the House of Lords. In spite of this, and in retaliation to suspicions that the Conservative party had started to reconsider Home Rule, the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) was formed in 1905.¹⁴ The UUC brought together and officiated local Unionist organisations throughout Ulster.

After Edward Carson became leader of the Irish Unionist Party in 1910, he fought a sustained campaign against Home Rule.¹⁵ The threat of Home Rule persisted as the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), led by John Redmond, held the key to a majority. The British General Election of January 1910 left the Liberal party with a two seat majority over the

¹² For a background to the Conservative party in Ireland and their attitude to the Union pre-1886, please see Andrew Shields, *The Irish Conservative Party, 1852-1868: Land, Politics and Religion* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007).

¹³ William Ewart Gladstone, Liberal. Prime Minister 1868-1874, 1880-1885, 1886 and 1892-1894. See especially David George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *Gladstone and Ireland: Politics, Religion and Nationality in the Victorian Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Jeremy Smith, *The Tories and Ireland: Conservative Party Politics and the Home Rule Crisis, 1910-1914* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000). For a biography of Gladstone see John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). The Irish Parliamentary Party is also referred to as the Home Rule Party. It was founded by Isaac Butt in 1874 and was dissolved in 1922.

¹⁴ For more on the UUC, please see Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party; Protest, Pragmatism and Pessimism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2004).

¹⁵ Baron Edward Carson, Leader of the Irish Unionist Parliamentary Party and the Ulster Unionist Party, 1910-1921. Two of the best biographies in Carson are Ian Colvin and Edward Marjoribanks, *The Life of Lord Carson, Vol. 1* (London: Gollancz, 1932) *The Life of Lord Carson, Vol. 2* (London: Gollancz, 1934) and *The Life of Lord Carson, Vol. 3* (London: Gollancz, 1936) and Alvin Jackson, *Sir Edward Carson* (Dundalk: Morgan Press, 1993).

Conservatives. An alliance with the IPP, who were the largest minority party with 82 returned Members of Parliament (MPs), would leave the Liberals with a comfortable hold over the Commons.¹⁶ When the Third Home Rule Bill passed in April 1912, Unionists became more determined than ever to stop the initiative. Carson led the people of North-East Ireland on Ulster Day in September.¹⁷ During the same time, the Ulster Volunteers began to emerge as the fighting force against Home Rule. The Third Home Rule Bill also saw Conservative leaders use language that was tantamount to provocation, such as their vociferous attempts to disrupt the passage of the Bill. But Ulster Unionists continued to turn to militant action. The UUC organised the Larne gun-running, a major smuggling operation to equip the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) with arms sent from Germany. WW1 saw the Third Home Rule Bill delayed for 6 years.

In the interim, the Easter Rising of 1916 by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) significantly altered support for independence in Ireland and saw the rise of Sinn Féin, an Irish nationalist party.¹⁸ Eventually in 1920 the Fourth Home Rule Bill, officially the Government of Ireland Act, was enacted. This oversaw the formation of Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. Yet the Irish problem remained unsolved. The Anglo-Irish War, or the Irish War of Independence, which had begun in 1919, continued until the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 was signed.¹⁹ The Treaty caused outrage amongst Unionists due to the establishment of Irish independence. Northern Ireland opted out of the Free State and a Boundary Commission was set up to draw up a border.²⁰ Following partition, evidence suggests that, for the most part, British politics disengaged from the Irish question.

¹⁶ Neal Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties and the People: The General Elections of 1910* (London: MacMillan, 1972), p. 377.

¹⁷ See Ronald McNeill, *Ulster's Stand for Union* (London: tradition, 2012), A.T.Q. Stewart, *Ulster Crisis: Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-1914* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1997) and Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party* for more on the Ulster Covenant.

¹⁸ For more on the Easter Rising see especially Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹⁹ There is an extensive selection of historiographies covering the Anglo-Irish War. Two of the best are Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002) and Charles Townsend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918-1923* (London: Penguin, 2014). For more on the Anglo-Irish Treaty see especially Jason Knirck, *Imagining Ireland's Independence: The Debates Over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005) and Frank Longford, *Peace by Ordeal: An Account, from First Hand Sources, of the Negotiation and Signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921* (London: New English Library, 1967).

²⁰ See especially Paul Murray, *The Irish Boundary Commission and its Origins, 1886-1925* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011).

Between 1932 and 1938, Britain and the Irish Free State were engaged in a Trade War.²¹ The dispute stemmed from the Free State's refusal to pay Britain land annuities. The Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement, signed by Éamon de Valera, leader of Fianna Fáil and Taoiseach, and Neville Chamberlain, Conservative Prime Minister, ended the war.²² The terms of the settlement, however, caused an argument amongst the Conservatives in the Commons when it was revealed that Chamberlain had surrendered Irish Treaty Ports. The Republic of Ireland's neutrality during WW2 led Winston Churchill, Conservative Prime Minister, to state that he was 'sick' of Ireland.²³ Following the Republic of Ireland Act of 1948, in which Ireland declared itself an independent Republic, the UK government passed the Ireland Act in 1949.

Aside from recognising the Republic of Ireland as an independent country, the Ireland Act also stated that Northern Ireland would remain part of the UK as long as the majority of its citizens wanted to. During the 1950s and up until 1969, relations between the Conservatives and the Ulster Unionists disintegrated into a series of spat as Jeremy Smith outlined in his article 'Ever Reliable Friends.'²⁴ Unionist paranoia increased as paramilitary violence, particularly during the PIRA's border campaign between 1956 and 1962, escalated. Meanwhile, the Conservative party tried to reinvent itself as a modern party. Its link with the Unionists proved an embarrassment as sectarianism continued. Therefore, the Conservative party slipped into a 'certain coolness' towards their colleagues across the Irish Sea.²⁵

²¹ See Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) for more on the Trade War and its consequences.

²² Éamon de Valera, co-founder of Fianna Fáil. Leader of Fianna Fáil 1926-1959. Taoiseach 1937-1948, 1951-1956 and 1957-1959. President of Ireland 1959-1973. For biographies of de Valera please see Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London: Arrow, 1995) and Ronan Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: A Will to Power* (London: Faber and Faber, 2016). Neville Chamberlain, Conservative. Leader of the Party 1937-1940. Prime Minister 1937-1940. See Ian Chambers, *The Chamberlains, the Churchill's and Ireland, 1874-1922* (New York: Cambria Press, 2006) for more on Chamberlain's efforts in resisting Home Rule in Ireland.

²³ Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*, p. 141. Sir Winston Churchill, Conservative. Leader of the Conservative Party 1940-1955. Prime Minister 1940-1945 and 1951-1955. For more on Churchill and Ireland please see Kevin Matthews, 'Churchill and Ulster Unionists: 1918-1925' in *The Churchill's in Ireland, 1660-1965: Connections and Controversies*, ed., by Robert McNamara (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012) and Richard Toye "'Phrases Make History Here": Churchill, Ireland and the Rhetoric of Empire,' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 38, no. 4 (2010). Ireland's reasons for adopting neutrality, and the consequences of Churchill's anger, can be found in Bryce Evans, *Ireland During the Second World War: Farewell to Plato's Cave* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014). For a view into how the Irish were treated in England during the interwar period, including during the Irish Civil War, please see Mo Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²⁴ Jeremy Smith, 'Ever Reliable Friends'? The Conservative Party and Ulster Unionism in the Twentieth Century,' *The English Historical Review*, vol. 491, no 490 (2006).

²⁵ *ibid.*,

However, they were forced to engage with Northern Ireland with the onset of The Troubles in 1969.²⁶ The emergence of Thatcher as Conservative party leader, and her New Right ideology, signified to the Unionists that a change was on the horizon.²⁷

When Thatcher became leader of the Conservative party in 1975, interest in maintaining the Union was at an all time low. The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) had broken ties with the Conservatives in 1972.²⁸ For Unionists, Thatcher's instalment as leader of the Conservative party signified a new age. On the surface she appeared more invested in Northern Ireland than many of her predecessors. At various times she referred to the province. In Belfast in 1978 she had said that the Conservative and Unionist parties were united by one 'common purpose: the maintenance and strengthening of the Union.'²⁹ The final section of this introduction will outline the central research question this thesis seeks to answer. It will also delve into the existing historiography, indicating the contribution to knowledge this work offers. Further to this a discussion of the methodology will be outlined in order to understand where the information used has come from.

Playing the Orange Card: Westminster and the Home Rule Crises, 1885-1921

From 1885, Gladstone began to lobby for Home Rule in Ireland.³⁰ His Home Rule bills stressed the insignificance of Unionists in the Irish question. For Loughlin, this revealed Gladstone's ignorance of 'the northern Protestant community and the seriousness of the threat it posed.'³¹ Gladstone failed to realise the emotional impact Home Rule would have on Unionists. 'The intensity of emotion associated with it had been steadily building up in

²⁶ For more on the impact of The Troubles on Britain, please refer to Graham Dawson, Jo Dover and Stephen Hopkins (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

²⁷ Thatcher wrote two books about her life before and during her time as Prime Minister. Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993) and *The Path to Power* (London: HarperCollins, 1995). There is also a collection of selected speeches and interviews in Margaret Thatcher and Iain Dale, *Margaret Thatcher: In Her Own Words* (London: Biteback, 2010). For more on Thatcher and Thatcherism please see Jonathan Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), E.H.H. Green, *Thatcher* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography: Vol. One: Not for Turning* (London: Allen Lane, 2013) and *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography: Vol. Two: Everything She Wants* (London: Penguin, 2016) and Stanislaw G. Pugliese, *The Political Legacy of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Politico's, 2003).

²⁸ Smith, 'Ever Reliable Friends.'

²⁹ MTF, 'Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Ulster Unionist Council (business lunch),' 19 June 1978, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103715>.

³⁰ Loughlin, *Ulster Question Since 1945*, p. 7.

³¹ Loughlin, *Gladstone, Home Rule and the Ulster Question, 1882-1893* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p. 132, p. 123.

previous years.’ Unionists believed they had colonised Ulster on Britain’s behalf, therefore Britain was bound by honour not to abandon them there and ‘(hand) them over to their enemies.’³² For Ulster Unionists, Home Rule was the ultimate betrayal by the British Government.³³ Yet, even within the Conservative party, there was support for Home Rule.

Lord Henry Carnarvon, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, invited Parnell to London to discuss Home Rule, and revealed in private that he was in favour of it.³⁴ Lord Randolph Churchill, a charismatic Conservative politician who later denounced Home Rule, also met with Parnell. Even the Tory Whip at the time, Rowland Winn, met with Richard Power, Whip for the Irish Parliamentary Party, to talk about the Irish problem. Jackson surmised that in 1885, the Conservatives were ‘playing the political field.’³⁵ When some Conservative figures rejected Home Rule, Unionists believed they had support at Westminster.

The aforementioned Churchill was the first such champion. His true attitude to Home Rule was ambiguous, and remains so in historiography.³⁶ But in 1886, Ulster Unionists had reason to believe that Churchill was on their side. He had grown up in ‘an atmosphere favourable to Ulster Unionism’ and was aware of his personal links to the province.³⁷ Churchill’s trip to Belfast in 1886 swiftly entered Unionist folklore and has been described as the high point of Home Rule fever. ‘Its effect was to bring the Ulster Unionist case to the

³² Loughlin, *Gladstone*, pp. 157-161. Catholics and protestants had experienced social and economic segregation since the Ulster Plantation in the seventeenth century. In northern industries, including ship building and textiles, managerial posts were strictly reserved for protestant applicants. Such was the level of segregation between catholic and protestant that ‘for the most part, they only knew each other through the public pronouncements of political leaders.’ The ‘them and us’ culture that had evolved between the Protestants and Catholics of Ireland create a unique minefield for successive British Governments to negotiate. To fully understand the ongoing political issues of the twentieth century, the situation needs to be understood as a multi-faceted set of problems. For the role of religion, see Marianne Elliott, *When God Took Sides: Religion and Identity in Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). To understand the influence political ideology played, please see Richard Bourke, *Peace in Ireland: The War of Ideas* (London: Pimlico, 2003). See Jon Calame, Esther Charlesworth, Lebbeus Woods, *Divided Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012),

³³ Loughlin, *Ulster Question*, p. 7.

³⁴ Grenfell Morton, *Home Rule and the Irish Question* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 30. Henry Herbert, Earl of Carnarvon. Conservative. Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1885-1886.

³⁵ Jackson, *Home Rule*, pp. 49-50. See also Allen Warren, ‘Lord Salisbury and Ireland, 1859-1887: Principles, Ambition and Strategies,’ *Parliamentary History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2007), pp. 203-224.

³⁶ See Alistair B. Cooke, *Ulster: The Origins of the Problem* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1988) and Jeremy Smith, *The Tories and Ireland: Conservative Party Politics and the Home Rule Crisis, 1910-1914* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000). Quinault believed that Churchill’s concerns for Ulster were genuine, and stemmed from his familial links to the area, R.E. Quinault, ‘Lord Randolph Churchill and Home Rule,’ *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 84 (1979), pp. 377-403.

³⁷ Quinault, ‘Lord Randolph Churchill and Home Rule,’ pp. 377-403.

forefront of political attention.’³⁸ Churchill assured the crowd that England would support the fight against Home Rule and would take up arms if necessary. ‘Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right’ became the battle cry against Home Rule. He used the Irish issue to his advantage by establishing himself as an expert on Irish affairs at Westminster.³⁹ Churchill flashed the orange card and admitted that he hoped it was the right one to play before the General Election of July 1886. Foster argues that his actions were tactical, ‘founded on short-term goals’ and that he ‘detached himself from Unionism as swiftly as was decent.’⁴⁰ Churchill’s front-bench career ended in September 1886. Churchill tried to call Lord Salisbury’s bluff over his unpopular budget cuts by threatening to resign.⁴¹ Salisbury accepted Churchill’s resignation unconditionally, his ‘meteoric political career’ was over.⁴² The First Home Rule Bill had also failed. It was defeated by 30 votes in the Commons and until the Second Home Rule Bill in 1893, ‘Ulsteria’ within the Conservative party waned.⁴³

In the interim between the First and Second Home Rule Bills, while Salisbury was Prime Minister, Conservative rhetoric on Home Rule and Ireland was almost non-existent. This gives credence to Jackson’s hypothesis that anti-Home Rule statements by the Conservatives only occurred when they were in opposition and needed ‘to rally support around a popular cause.’ Jackson also points out that Irish Unionists had not yet agreed ‘what they were defending, or how it should be defended.’ Therefore, ‘complete harmony’ with the Conservative party could not be achieved.⁴⁴ The thing that held the alliance together was the belief that ‘Parnellite Nationalism did not represent the true feeling of the Irish people.’⁴⁵ The split in the Home Rule party in 1890, caused by the scandal of Katharine O’Shea naming Parnell as her lover in her divorce papers, weakened the Home Rule movement

³⁸ Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, pp. 10-11 and Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, p. 257.

³⁹ Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, p. 41.

⁴⁰ R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr. Punch, Connections in Irish and English History* (London: Faber, 2011), p. 250.

⁴¹ Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, known as Lord Salisbury until 1865, the Viscount Cranborne from 1866-1868, and thereafter the Marquess of Salisbury. Conservative Prime Minister 1885-1886, 1886-1892 and 1895-1902.

⁴² Robert Blake, *The Conservative Party from Peel to Thatcher* (London: Heinemann, 1997), pp. 158-159 and Norman McCord and Bill Purdue, *British History 1815-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 411.

⁴³ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p. 117.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117, p. 119.

⁴⁵ Peter Davis, ‘The Liberal Unionist Party and the Irish Policy of Lord Salisbury’s Government,’ *The Historical Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1975), pp. 85-104.

considerably.⁴⁶ When a General Election was called in 1892, Home Rule was treated as a side line to other issues.

The 1892 campaign was tame in comparison with the language adopted by Churchill in 1886. This was partly because ‘the Irish issue no longer dominated British politics as exclusively as hitherto; social reforms, as the concoction of the Newcastlely [*sic*] programme testified, increasingly pre-occupied the attention of the electorate.’⁴⁷ The fact that another Home Rule Bill seemed unlikely given the split in the Parnellites also explains the absence of Home Rule in the 1892 campaign. When the Conservative party failed to gain a majority in the General Election Gladstone, thanks to the support of the Irish Nationalist Party, returned as Prime Minister.⁴⁸ And so, Home Rule loomed large once again.

When the Second Home Rule Bill appeared in 1893, more effort was made by the Conservatives to reach out to Ulster. Both Arthur Balfour and Salisbury visited Ulster.⁴⁹ ‘From an English perspective, these visits also offered Conservative leaders sentimental capital – the opportunity to identify themselves with an isolated and embattled community, and to pose as their champions against the threat of Home Rule.’⁵⁰ Part of the appeal of Ulster for the Tories was the idea of the Empire. Ireland was British territory and the cluster of Unionists in the North East could not be abandoned.⁵¹ Gladstone’s second attempt passed the Commons but was vetoed by the House of Lords, which had an overwhelming Conservative majority. Gladstone then retired from politics in 1894.⁵² This coupled with the fall from grace, and death, of Parnell meant that for the time being, Home Rule was off the agenda.⁵³

⁴⁶ Alan O’Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 180-81. For more on the O’Shea scandal, and its repercussions, please see Frank Callanan, *the Parnell Split, 1890-91* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992).

⁴⁷ Davis, ‘The Liberal Unionist Party,’ pp. 85-104. Davis here was referring to The Newcastle Programme, a programme adopted by the National Liberal federation in 1891 to try to attract the working class voter. Home Rule was still on the agenda, but housing and land reform were now on the agenda as well.

⁴⁸ Jackson, *Home Rule*, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁹ Arthur Balfour, Conservative. Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1887-1891, Prime Minister 1902-1905. For more on Balfour see Max Egremont, *Balfour, A Life of Arthur James Balfour* (London: Phoenix, 1998) and Kenneth Young, *Arthur James Balfour: The Happy Life of the Politician, Prime Minister, Statesman and Philosopher, 1848-1930* (London: Bell, 1963).

⁵⁰ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, pp. 118-119.

⁵¹ Loughlin, *Gladstone, Home Rule and the Ulster Question*, pp. 157-161.

⁵² Jackson, *Home Rule*, p. 85.

⁵³ Parnell died in 1891.

How did relations between the Conservatives and Unionists fare between the Second and Third Home Rule Bills? Although the formal connection remained, without the immediate risk to the Empire that Home Rule threatened, once again the Conservatives turned their attention to other matters. Ulster Unionists, in response to the devolution crisis in 1904-05, decided to reorganize themselves into the UUC in 1905.⁵⁴ The Council was formed 'to cast off the antique forms of political organization which had been forged under their landed predecessors.'⁵⁵ After the Irish Nationalist Party agreed to support the Liberals in Parliament in 1910 following the January General Election, Home Rule returned as a focal point in British politics.⁵⁶ In February, Unionists elected a new leader in the form of Carson. The following year, Herbert Asquith, Liberal Prime Minister, introduced the Third Home Rule Bill.⁵⁷ Now that the Lords power of veto had been removed, Home Rule for Ireland was within the Liberal majority's grasp.

Andrew Bonar Law, the future leader of the Conservative Party, made a brief tour of Ulster in April 1912.⁵⁸ In front of a crowd of 100,000 he stood under the world's largest Union Flag and proclaimed the 'wedding of Protestant Ulster with the Conservative Unionist Party.'⁵⁹ In July, he made an impassioned speech during a Unionist rally at Blenheim Palace. He professed that Ulster had a 'right to resist (Home Rule) by force' and that, if they did so, 'they would have the Unionist Party in England wholeheartedly behind them.'⁶⁰ Bonar Law 'threw himself heart and soul into the support of the Ulster cause.' Blake argues that he sympathised with the Unionist minority in what would become the Irish Free State. In a contribution to a book entitled *Against Home Rule*, Bonar Law concluded 'Ireland is not a nation; it is two nations.'⁶¹ In Bonar Law, Ulster Unionists believed they had found the 'son

⁵⁴ Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p. 236.

⁵⁶ For more on the deal struck between the Liberals and the Irish Parliamentary Party please see Conor Mulvagh, *The Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, 1900-18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), chpt. 4.

⁵⁷ Herbert Asquith, The Earl of Oxford and Asquith. Liberal. Leader of the party 1908-1926. Prime Minister 1908-1916.

⁵⁸ Andrew Bonar Law, Conservative. Leader of the party 1916-1921 and 1922-1923. Prime Minister 1922-1923. As the son of a proud Ulsterman, Bonar Law was well versed in the culture and divisions of the province. For more on Bonar Law, see R.J.Q. Adams, *Bonar Law* (London: John Murray, 1999), Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010) and H.A. Taylor, *The Strange Case of Andrew Bonar Law* (London: Stanley and Paul, 1932),

⁵⁹ Taylor, *The Strange Case of Andrew Bonar Law*, pp. 177-178.

⁶⁰ Adams, *Bonar Law*, pp. 109-110.

⁶¹ Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 180.

of an Ulsterman,' an ally at Westminster.⁶² Yet, as Smith notes, it is important to remember that Bonar Law's support also came from a desire to take power from the Liberals. Aside from Home Rule, 'the Conservatives had few other policies or issues upon which effectively to challenge the Liberals.'⁶³ Bonar Law was 'as concerned to keep his party together and to maintain his own precarious position as he was anxious to give real support to Ulster.'⁶⁴ Ulster Unionists felt increasingly 'sidelined [*sic*], talked over, overruled.'⁶⁵ Their solution to this was Ulster Day.

On 28 September, Carson was the first person to sign the Ulster Covenant. The message, and the use of the word Covenant, was carefully planned. 'Thiers was an ancient struggle, the courage and will of people long dead called the living representatives of that lineage to defend their heritage with vigour.'⁶⁶ The suspicion that the final decision on Home Rule would be decided without consultation with the Ulster Unionists 'fuelled the fervour and the determination around the Covenant in 1912.'⁶⁷ The Covenant was dismissed by some as a publicity stunt, but Unionists had also started to threaten physical violence against a united Ireland. By 1913, around 90,000 volunteers from the unionist community joined together to form the UVF, a private army committed to defending Ulster against Home Rule.⁶⁸ In 1914, the group was armed with rifles and ammunition thanks to a smuggling operation from Germany and Austria.⁶⁹ Between 1912 and 1914 the Conservatives supported the UVF.⁷⁰ For a time,

⁶² Jeremy Smith, 'Bluff, Bluster and Brinkmanship: Andrew Bonar Law and the Third Home Rule Bill,' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, no. 1 (1993), pp. 161-178. For a general overview of the importance of the Irish question at Westminster, please refer to Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics* and Brendan O'Duffy, *British-Irish Relations and Northern Ireland, From Violent Politics to Conflict Regulation* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007).

⁶³ Jeremy Smith, 'Bluff, Bluster and Brinkmanship: Andrew Bonar Law and the Third Home Rule Bill,' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, no. 1 (1993), pp. 161-178.

⁶⁴ Richard Murphy, 'Faction in the Conservative Party and the Home Rule Crisis, 1912-14,' *History*, vol. 71, no. 232 (1986), pp. 222-234.

⁶⁵ Graham Walker, 'The Ulster Covenant and the pulse of Protestant Ulster,' *National Identities* (2015), pp. 1-13.

⁶⁶ John Brewer and Gareth Higgins, *Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland, 1600-1998: The Mote and the Beam* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 83.

⁶⁷ Graham Walker, 'The Ulster Covenant and the pulse of Protestant Ulster,' *National Identities* (2015), pp. 1-13.

⁶⁸ For more on the UVF, see especially Timothy Bowman, *Carson's Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

⁶⁹ James W. McAuley, *Very British Rebels? The Culture and Politics of Ulster Loyalism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 22.

⁷⁰ Robert Saunders, 'Tory Rebels and Tory Democracy: The Ulster Crisis, 1900-14,' in *The Foundations of the Conservative Party: Essays on Conservatism from Lord Salisbury to David Cameron*, ed., by Bradley W. Hart and Richard Carr (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 66.

Ulster Unionists and Conservatives became allies in a defensive ‘Tory’ crusade in British politics, with the Act of Union a counter-revolutionary symbol for a ‘revolutionary’ age, and with the Ulstermen cast as a sort of Praetorian Guard in defence of a wider Conservative vision of society.⁷¹

The Third Home Rule Bill, known formally as the Government of Ireland Act, was passed in 1914. Due to the outbreak of WW1, it was postponed. During those six years, events were to have an impact on the British Government’s attitude towards Ireland.

The Easter Rising of 1916 hardened British attitudes and although Hunt argues that ‘war-time cooperation ... left all post-war Tory Prime ministers and several leading Ministers ... with a more obviously pro-Unionist outlook,’ the end of WW1 also ‘witnessed (the) established Conservative discourse on the Union lose its relevance and appeal.’⁷² With extended enfranchisement, the Conservative party needed to appeal to a working class electorate with concerns other than the age old Irish problem. The disparity between the Conservative’s anti-Home Rule campaign and the militant Unionist movement meant that the two groups were political allies, but simultaneously independent partners.⁷³

When the British Government decided to introduce conscription in Ireland in 1918, the Irish Parliamentary Party lost its ‘last shred of credibility.’ At the General Election in December 1918, the Irish Parliamentary Party was superseded by Sinn Féin who won 73 of Ireland’s 105 seats.⁷⁴ The Home Rule party was overshadowed by a revolutionary republican party that went on to declare itself head of the Irish Republic in January 1919.⁷⁵ A cabinet committee, dedicated to finding a solution to Ireland, was formed the same year and, in 1920, the Government of Ireland Act was introduced to Parliament. Ireland was partitioned and Northern Ireland was created in 1920. Northern Ireland was headed by a devolved government with local powers to deal with local affairs. “We want to remain with you,”

⁷¹ Smith, ‘Ever Reliable Friends,’ pp. 70-103.

⁷² Jocelyn Hunt, *Britain: 1846-1919* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 223 and Smith, ‘Ever Reliable Friends,’ pp. 70-103.

⁷³ Smith, ‘Ever Reliable Friends,’ pp. 70-103 and Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 150. See also Jackson, *Home Rule* for more on the increasing disparity between the Ulster Unionist’s Home Rule strategy and the Conservatives at Westminster.

⁷⁴ Reynolds, *The Long Shadow*, p. 29.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Carson told the House of Commons at the time. “Do not turn us out”.⁷⁶ Thousands of Unionists in Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan now found themselves citizens of the Free State, ‘any representation of the Union as a guardian of British rights (was) difficult to justify.’⁷⁷

The Irish War of Independence, which had started in 1919, meant that Home Rule for Southern Ireland could not be implemented. Therefore in 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed.⁷⁸ This ended the War and established Southern Ireland as the Irish Free State, a self governing Republic completely separate from the United Kingdom. Birkenhead asserted that Ulster had nothing to fear from the establishment of the Irish Free State.⁷⁹ But the Treaty heightened insecurity within Unionist circles. Now, nationalism was on their doorstep and the border ‘made for a highly conflicting set of social and political relations and created a civic arena dominated by the border and the reinforcement of opposing social and political identities.’⁸⁰ In response to this, Carson denounced Austen Chamberlain, a Conservative who had been fervently against Home Rule before the start of WW1, and F.E. Smith, the Lord Chancellor who had also been a prominent Unionist, and declared that the friendship they shared was over. He continued, ‘I was only a puppet and so was Ulster and so was Ireland, in the political game that was to get the Conservative party into power.’ In response, Smith commented that Carson’s speech ‘would have been immature on the lips of a hysterical schoolgirl.’⁸¹

Before the 1921 Treaty, the Irish question held the spotlight in British politics. After 1921, the Ulster Unionists became ‘faintly ridiculous’ to Conservatives.⁸² The problem had been ‘solved’ with partition, but tension continued to bubble under the surface,

Sectarian conflict ravaged Belfast in 1920-2; Irish nationalism within the six counties refused to recognize the new state’s legitimacy; the Provisional Government of the

⁷⁶ H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson: The Life of Sir Edward Carson, Lord Carson of Duncairn* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1953), p. 445.

⁷⁷ Smith, ‘Ever Reliable Friends,’ pp. 70-103.

⁷⁸ See especially Jason K. Knirck, *Imagining Ireland’s Independence: The Debates over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1027-1049.

⁸⁰ McAuley, *Very British Rebels*, pp. 32-33.

⁸¹ Geoffrey Lewis, *Carson: The Man Who Divided Ireland* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 231.

⁸² Arthur Aughey, ‘Conservative Party Policy in Northern Ireland’ in *The Northern Ireland Question*, ed., by Barton and Roche, p. 123.

Irish Free State sponsored republican raids across the border and launched an economic boycott; and the threat of territorial loss through a Boundary Commission loomed ominously.⁸³

‘After the 1920s the governing class in England gave up on Ireland, which it saw as doing its own thing.’⁸⁴ Of course there were a few exceptions to this rule, but by and large Conservative politicians of the inter-war period showed little interest in Northern Ireland.

The Realm of ‘old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago’: Ulster Unionists at Westminster after 1921

The tenure of Stanley Baldwin, Conservative leader from 1923 to 1937, marks the beginning of a drift between Unionists and the Conservatives.⁸⁵ Baldwin wanted ‘to maintain the treaty settlement of 1921 and, at the same time, reunite his party.’⁸⁶ The Irish issue was no longer pivotal to Westminster, so much so that in 1923 the Speaker of the House of Commons banned any discussion of Northern Ireland and the Free State in the chamber.⁸⁷ During Baldwin’s first two terms as Prime Minister, the British Government’s Irish policy was handed over to civil servants. Therefore, ‘there could be no initiatives, for only politicians could accept the political risks attendant upon these.’⁸⁸

Even in 1924 with the establishment of the Boundary Commission, Baldwin and his colleagues said little about Ireland. In an effort to stop speeches on Ireland by his colleagues, Baldwin travelled to Belfast to convene with the Northern Ireland Cabinet. The one-day trip involved extended talks with James Craig, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, during which Baldwin made clear that there was little enthusiasm amongst Conservatives to support the boundary question.⁸⁹ Belfast had refused to appoint a boundary commissioner. The Privy Council ruled that the British government would need to implement new legislation if they

⁸³ Colin Reid, ‘Protestant Challenges to the Protestant State’: Ulster Unionism and Independent Unionism in Northern Ireland, 1921-1939,’ *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (2008), pp. 419-445.

⁸⁴ Bew, Patterson, Teague, *Between War and Peace*, p. 15.

⁸⁵ Stanley Baldwin, The Earl Baldwin of Bewdley. Conservative. Leader of the party 1923-1937. Prime Minister 1923-1924, 1924-1929, 1935-37.

⁸⁶ Kevin Matthews, ‘Stanley Baldwin’s Irish Question,’ *Historical Journal*, vol. 43, no. 4 (2000), pp. 1027-1049.

⁸⁷ Aughey, ‘Conservative Party Policy in Northern Ireland,’ p. 122 and Paul Bew, Henry Patterson, Paul Teague, *Between War and Peace, The Political Future of Northern Ireland* (London: Lawrences and Wishart, 1997), pp. 14-15.

⁸⁸ Paul Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland, 1921-1941* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 84.

⁸⁹ James Craig, Viscount Craigavon. Ulster Unionist. Prime Minister of Northern Ireland 1921-1940.

wanted to appoint a Commissioner themselves. This would risk splitting the party; the die-hards would support the Ulster Unionists and vote against the bill. ‘... if the House of Lords blocked the bill, an election in which the rallying call would be, like 1910, peers versus the people.’⁹⁰ When he returned to London, Craig sent word to Baldwin that the Ulster Unionists felt ‘bound to take every possible step to prevent the passage of the bill’ unless it was amended ‘to apply merely to an adjustment of the boundary.’ In spite of Baldwin’s best efforts, the Conservative party could not avoid the issue.⁹¹ Craig’s decision to fight Labour’s boundary bill meant that the Conservatives were back to square one. This was a major problem for the party.

They had hoped to defeat the Liberals but the Irish question could jeopardise their goal. Ireland could ‘create just the sort of uproar that David Lloyd George, Liberal Prime Minister, thrived on, and which both Labour and the Conservatives were determined to avoid at all costs.’⁹² Baldwin decided to form an alliance with the Ulster Unionists. In the end the success of the Conservative party was due more to Baldwin’s playing the red over the orange card. With Labour confirmed as the socialist representative, the Conservatives easily defeated the Liberals at a time when their leadership was weak. ‘Without the diversion of the communist scare used so effectively by Baldwin’s lieutenants, it would have been impossible to extricate us from the *cul-de-sac* of Ireland.’⁹³

Anglo-Irish relations became strained during the tenures of Chamberlain and Éamon de Valera, leader of Fianna Fáil.⁹⁴ The Great Depression,

contributed greatly to the deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations from 1929-1931 ... In Ireland, economic nationalism ... was beginning to gain wider appeal. In Britain,

⁹⁰ Neil C. Fleming, *The Marquess of Londonderry: Aristocracy, Power and Politics in Britain and Ireland* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 102-103. For more on the internal debate between the Ulster Unionists and the Conservatives over the Boundary Commission, see also Kevin Matthews, *Fatal Influence: The Impact of Ireland on British Politics, 1920-1925* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003).

⁹¹ Matthews, ‘Stanley Baldwin’s Irish Question,’ pp. 1027-1049.

⁹² *i*Bid., pp. 1027-1049. David Lloyd George, Liberal. Leader of the party 1926-1931. Prime Minister 1916-1922.

⁹³ Matthews, ‘Stanley Baldwin’s Irish Question,’ pp. 1027-1049.

⁹⁴ Éamon de Valera, founder of Fianna Fáil. President of Dáil Éireann 1919-1921, President of the Irish Republic 1921-1922, Leader of Fianna Fáil 1926-1959, Taoiseach 1937-1948, 1951-1954, 1957-1959, President of Ireland 1959-1973.

higher unemployment ... put added pressure on the Government to restrict Irish immigration.⁹⁵

This tension eventually disintegrated into an economic war in 1932.⁹⁶ The cause of this war was 'Fianna Fáil's dream of an Ireland untrammelled by what it perceived as degrading linkages with the former imperial power.'⁹⁷ The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1938 ended those hostilities and gave de Valera enough concessions from the UK to satisfy Fianna Fáil. Chamberlain retained control of three treaty ports and agreed to drop his £26 million land annuities price to £10 million.⁹⁸ This provoked a row on his own backbenches. War with Germany was now expected. Winston Churchill, future Prime Minister, predicted that Chamberlain's decision to surrender the Treaty would prevent Britain from protecting themselves from 'German submarines in Atlantic shipping lanes.'⁹⁹ Chamberlain then turned his attention to Hitler and Europe before resigning as Prime Minister at the beginning of the war.¹⁰⁰ His successor's continued to disengage from Northern Ireland.

WW2 was a catastrophic global conflict that changed British popular attitude towards the Irish question. Aughey argues that Churchill is the personification of this shift, while Bew concludes that from the outset his 'tone towards Ulster Unionism was cold and contemptuous.' Unionists 'paraded their loyalty, using it to extort concessions and privilege from the British government; when any man attempted to do even-handed justice in the King's name, they complained they were being betrayed.'¹⁰¹ Churchill was infuriated by Irish neutrality during WW2. He described their stance as 'odious.'¹⁰² When Harold Wilson, future Labour Prime Minister, drew up a report that criticised Northern Ireland's contribution to the war effort in 1940, it was accepted by Churchill.¹⁰³ Northern Ireland was exempt from conscription during WW2. This 'reflected badly on the Unionist government that Northern

⁹⁵ Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland*, p. 115.

⁹⁶ For more on the Anglo-Irish Trade War, see especially Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland* and Kevin O'Rourke, 'Burn Everything British but their Coal: The Anglo-Irish Economic War of the 1930s,' in *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 51, no. 2 (1991), pp. 357-366.

⁹⁷ Jackson, *Ireland*, pp. 288-289.

⁹⁸ Henry Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939: The Persistence of Conflict* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 25.

⁹⁹ Lawrence John McCaffrey, *The Irish Question: Two Centuries of Conflict* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p. 155.

¹⁰⁰ Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 298.

¹⁰¹ Aughey, 'Conservative Party Policy in Northern Ireland,' pp. 121-122 and Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*, p. 36.

¹⁰² Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*, p. 141.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 148. Harold Wilson, Baron Wilson of Rievaulx, Liberal MP 1945-1983, Prime Minister 1964-1970, 1974-1976.

Ireland had to be treated differently from the rest of the UK, and the absence of conscription fuelled the notion that the Province was only ‘half involved’ in the war.’¹⁰⁴ The end of WW2 also highlighted lifestyle differences between the people of Northern Ireland and mainland Britain.

After WW2, it seemed as though Britain moved on while Northern Ireland remained stagnant. International migration to mainland Britain saw an explosion of multi-culturalism that had unforeseen effects on British culture. Church attendance declined and more families took the chance of a fresh start in countries like Australia.¹⁰⁵ ‘... so too decreased the sentimental affinity of British public life within the concerns of loyal Ulster with the very notable exception of the common sacrifices of (WW2). Life was now elsewhere.’¹⁰⁶ Modernity and culture swept the country and would prove key to the survival of the political elite. The Free State was also looking to make a big change.

In 1948, Taoiseach John Costello announced that the Irish Free State was a Republic.¹⁰⁷ The Free State then passed the Republic of Ireland Act which abolished the last remaining functions of the King. The Free State became the Republic of Ireland.¹⁰⁸ In response to this, and following the Free State’s policy of neutrality during WW2, in 1949 the British Government passed the Ireland Act. The Ireland Act broke the remaining ties between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and decreed that Northern Ireland would remain part of the UK so long as the majority wanted to. The British Government left Northern Ireland ‘... with complete autonomy over law and order, and considerable independence in domestic public policy.’¹⁰⁹ The Conservative party manifesto in the 1950 UK general election repeated this, enforcing the message that it was up to ‘the Northern Irish Parliament to decide its future,

¹⁰⁴ Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁵ McAuley, Tonge, Mycock, *Loyal to the Core?* p. 111.

¹⁰⁶ Aughey, ‘Conservative Party Policy in Northern,’ p. 122.

¹⁰⁷ John Costello, *Fine Gael. Taoiseach 1948-1951, 1954-1957*. David McCullagh, *John A. Costello The Reluctant Taoiseach: A Biography of John A. Costello* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2010), p. 209.

¹⁰⁸ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Unresolved Question: The Anglo-Irish Settlement and its Undoing, 1912-72* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 334.

¹⁰⁹ Brendan O’Leary and John McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 110.

while the Tory Party held what appeared to be an impartial *public* stance on the future of the Union.¹¹⁰

‘For God's sake bring me a large Scotch. What a bloody awful country’¹¹¹: 1950-1974

Although relations between the Conservative party and the Ulster Unionists remained friendly throughout the 1950s, there were instances of ‘friction or disappointment’ between the two parties. As Ulster Unionism developed a more radical flavour, particularly when Ian Paisley, founder of the Democratic Unionist Party emerged, Conservatives became increasingly ‘offended by the sectarian dimension to Ulster Unionism.’¹¹² Paisley was part of a long tradition of Protestant Evangelism in Northern Ireland and of Ulster Unionists who became alternative figureheads from the mainstream Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).¹¹³ Part of Paisley’s appeal was a continuation of the link between God and Ulster. Just as Carson had signed the Covenant, the Reverend Paisley persisted that the Protestant struggle against Catholicism was ‘divinely inspired and directed.’¹¹⁴ A cult of rumour was central to Paisley’s campaigns where the story of an imminent Catholic uprising (to avenge lands lost during the Ulster plantation) was ingrained on the psyche. ‘Such rumours were simply a part of the folklore of Ulster Protestantism that was likely to be widely publicised in a period of political crisis.’ He encouraged Loyalists to oppose the emerging civil rights movement. This resulted in frequent affrays throughout the 1960s.¹¹⁵ Paisley’s extremism served to isolate Unionism further from the Conservative leadership.

From the early 1950s, there was ‘a growing and mutual incomprehension’ between the UUP and the Conservative Party. The Ulster Unionists felt that the ‘Conservative Party was ignoring them and their concerns,’ and this is partly because the Conservatives were not

¹¹⁰ Smith, ‘Ever Reliable Friends,’ pp. 70-103.

¹¹¹ The quote used in this sub-heading title is from Reginald Maudling, Conservative Home Secretary 1970-1972. Maudling said this after his first visit to Northern Ireland in 1970.

¹¹² Dr. Ian Paisley, Baron Bannside. Founder of the DUP and Protestant Evangelical Minister. DUP MP 1970-2010. Leader of the DUP 1971-2008, First Minister of Northern Ireland 2007-2008. Alvin Jackson, *The Two Unions: Ireland, Scotland and the Survival of the United Kingdom, 1707-2007* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 326.

¹¹³ For more on these figures please see Colin Reid, ‘Protestant Challenges to the ‘Protestant State’: Ulster Unionism and Independent Unionism in Northern Ireland, 1921-1939,’ *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (2008), pp. 419-445 and Frank Wright, *Two Lands on One Soil: Ulster Politics Before Home Rule* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994).

¹¹⁴ Graham Spencer, *Protestant Identity and Peace in Northern Ireland* (London: Springer, 2012), p. 62.

¹¹⁵ Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal and the Search for Peace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 57.

reliant upon the UUP, with the exception of the 1951 general election (see Table 1).¹¹⁶ It appears that British Conservatives did not feel the need to cement the link either because they were relatively uninterested in Northern Ireland and/or because they could take Unionist support at Westminster for granted.¹¹⁷ Unionists took the Conservative Whip to help the Tories at Westminster. However, the impact of Unionist support after 1945 is underwhelming.¹¹⁸

Table 1) Results of UK General Elections, 1945-1974

General Election Date	Conservative MPs	Unionist MPs	Labour MPs
July 1945	188	8	393
February 1950	210	36	315
October 1951	293*	9	295
May 1955	335	10	277
October 1959	353	12	258
October 1964	292*	12	317
March 1966	242*	11	364
June 1970	321	9	298
February 1974	297	7	301
October 1974	277	6	319

Blue indicates an overall Conservative victory, red a Labour.

*Including seats from the National Liberal Party.

Further to this, the Conservative party wanted to reinvent itself. Many considered its traditional views on the British Empire sentimental. ‘For Ulster Unionists, however, the dead hand of the past, territorial integrity and borders were the very core of their existence.’¹¹⁹ As Prime Minister, Churchill continued to support the unification of Ireland, ‘if she were wooed and won of her own free will and consent I, personally, would regard such an event as a

¹¹⁶ Smith, ‘Ever Reliable Friends,’ pp. 70-103.

¹¹⁷ Michael Cunningham, ‘An Historical Coda: Some Reflections on the Conservatives and the Irish Question, 1949-1951,’ *Irish Political Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1999), pp. 132-137.

¹¹⁸ Data in table from Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 447-449.

¹¹⁹ Smith, ‘Ever Reliable Friends,’ pp. 70-103.

blessing for the whole of the British Empire and also for the civilised world.’¹²⁰ The Irish question was at the bottom of Churchill’s priority list. It only needed to be promoted when he sought popular support. ‘... (Churchill was) a political actor who had to navigate ever-changing waters where, several times, he ran aground.’¹²¹ His arguments on Ireland ‘fitted rather suspiciously all too neatly with his contemporary political ambitions’ and by the end of his political career, ‘... he had almost ... run through the gamut of positions on Ireland that it was possible for a mainstream Westminster politician to hold.’¹²² When he left office in 1955, elite Conservative disinterest in the province was cemented. During the 1960s, Westminster tried to ‘maintain a moderate Protestant unionist leadership, and (tried) to deliver enough civil rights reform to nurture a new and equally moderate Catholic nationalist leadership.’¹²³ The divide between the Ulster Unionists and the Conservatives was further exacerbated by the emergence of The Troubles in the late 1960s.

Inspired by the civil rights movement headed by Dr. Martin Luther King Junior in the United States, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement (NICRM) and the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ) emerged. These organisations sought to challenge the discrimination the catholic community faced from housing allocation, employment opportunities and media censorship. Catholics had also faced fifty years of targeted police attention under the Special Powers Act.¹²⁴ Instances of violence and death within the community increased tension while the use of the Special Powers Act to ban parades or to prevent the carrying of the Tricolour ‘was a potent symbol of the abnormality of the situation in Northern Ireland for its critics.’¹²⁵ Images of the police using batons and water cannons against seemingly innocent members

¹²⁰ Toye ‘Phrases Make History Here,’ pp. 549-570. Paul Bew quoting Winston Churchill, *Churchill and Ireland*, p. 167.

¹²¹ Matthews, ‘Churchill and Ulster Unionists,’ p. 128.

¹²² Toye ‘Phrases Make History Here,’ p. 175 and pp. 549-570.

¹²³ Marc Mulholland, ‘Just another country?’ The Irish Question in the Thatcher Years’ in *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, ed., by Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 184.

¹²⁴ See especially Mulholland’s chapter in *From the United Irishmen to Twentieth-Century Unionism: A Festschrift for A.T.Q. Stewart*, ed., by Sabine Wichert (Dublin: Four Courts, 2004) for more on discrimination in Northern Ireland.

¹²⁵ Feargal Cochrane, *Northern Ireland: The Reluctant Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 33-34. For more on the Special Powers Act see Laura K. Donohue, ‘Regulating Northern Ireland: The Special Powers Acts, 1922-1972,’ *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 4 (1998), pp. 1089-1120. For more on segregation in Northern Ireland see Patrick Buckland, ‘A Protestant State: Unionists in Government, 1921-39’ in *Defenders of the Union, A Survey of British and Irish Unionism Since 1801*, ed., by D. George Boyce and Alan O’Day (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 211-226 and Henry Patterson, ‘Party Versus Order: Ulster Unionism and the Flags and Emblems Act,’ *Contemporary British History*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1999), pp. 105-129.

of the public shocked the world.¹²⁶ Hostilities smouldered until 1968 when a civil rights march in Londonderry ended in chaos as children, Saturday shoppers and other bystanders were caught up in the violence. The protestors had intended to act peacefully on the day, but they marched up to police lines and threw items in a way that was seen as antagonistic. Tensions were set to worsen.

In 1972, it became clear to the British government that Northern Ireland could not govern itself. Bloody Sunday was the day Nationalist resentment towards the British Army and government was cemented. Although many pinpoint the Londonderry civil rights march of 1968 as the day The Troubles began, Bloody Sunday was the event that saw an increase in popular support for the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA).¹²⁷ Britain's policy of shoring up the centre had failed, and 'it seemed temporarily at a loss as to what to do next.'¹²⁸ The emergence of the PIRA, and the violence that ensued, led to the abolition of the Northern Ireland government in 1973. A deal between Northern Ireland's leading political parties, the UUP and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (the SDLP), the British and Irish governments, known as Sunningdale, saw the introduction of a new Northern Ireland Assembly. The Assembly would be elected by proportional representation and governed by an informal power-sharing executive. A group of politicians with limited powers would sit in Stormont.¹²⁹ A link with the government in Dublin was created through the Council of Ireland. But the council was a sore point for Unionists. Within five months the Ulster Workers Council staged strikes across Northern Ireland that saw the collapse of Sunningdale and Stormont. The Ulster Unionist and Conservative parties split again in 1973 and at the 1974 UK General Election, the Ulster Unionists refused to support the Conservative party. This reflected their fury with Heath's decision to prorogue Stormont, a devastating rejection

¹²⁶ See Anthony Craig, *Crisis of Confidence: Anglo-Irish Relations in the Early Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010) for more on how The Troubles affected relations between Westminster, Stormont and Dublin.

¹²⁷ For a detailed account of Bloody Sunday and its legacy, please see Peter Pringle and Philip Jacobson, *Those Are Real Bullets, Aren't They? Bloody Sunday, Derry, 30 January 1972* (London: Fourth Estate, 2001). For an overview of the impact of violence in Northern Ireland, please see Paul Bew and Gordon Gillespie, *Northern Ireland: A Chronology of The Troubles, 1968-1993* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1993).

¹²⁸ Mulholland, 'Just another country,' p. 184.

¹²⁹ Jessie Blackbourn, *Anti-Terrorism Law and Normalising Northern Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 33-34.

by a traditional ally. After the Conservative defeat, the party started to look for a new leader.¹³⁰

Thatcher on the Road to Number Ten, 1975-1979

After her election as party leader in 1975, Thatcher was invited to attend a meeting with Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan and Merlyn Rees, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.¹³¹ Thatcher accepted and brought along Airey Neave, her friend and Shadow Northern Ireland advisor.¹³² Neave wanted to implement full integration with the UK and aligned himself with hard-line unionism, although there is evidence that before his death, ‘while an integrationist posture in opposition was acceptable, the responsibilities and constraints of government meant that it was unlikely to be implemented.’¹³³ Thatcher seems to have initially followed Neave’s theory of integration as her meeting with the Labour Prime Minister shows.

The discussion saw Thatcher and Neave quiz Callaghan on key Northern Ireland issues that would resonate throughout her time as Conservative leader. Thatcher began by asking ‘... how much longer could the situation drag on?’¹³⁴ Callaghan and Rees set out to brief Thatcher on the full extent of the problem. Beginning with the politics of the region, Rees assured Thatcher that although Sinn Féin had attempted to open a secret channel with the Government they had refused to respond. Thatcher would find herself in a similar position during the 1980-1981 Hunger Strikes, although on that occasion she negotiated with the PIRA leadership (see chapter three). Thatcher then asked about intelligence, a key theme of

¹³⁰ Neal G. Jesse and Kristen P. Williams, *Identity and Institutions: Conflict Reduction in Divided Societies* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), p. 95.

¹³¹ James Callaghan, Labour. Leader of the Labour Party 1976-1980. Prime Minister 1976-1979. Merlyn Rees, Lord Merlyn Rees, Labour. MP 1963-1992. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1974-1976.

¹³² Airey Neave, war hero and Conservative. MP 1953-1979. Killed by INLA car bomb 1979. Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1974-1979.

¹³³ Paul Dixon, ‘British Policy Towards Northern Ireland 1969-2000: Continuity, Tactical Adjustment and Consistent ‘inconsistencies’,’ *The Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2001), pp. 340-368. See especially Paul Routledge, *Public Servant, Secret Agent: The Elusive Life and Violent Death of Airey Neave* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003) for more on Neave’s ideas for Northern Ireland. Thatcher, *Path to Power*, p. 327 and Routledge, *Public Servant*, p.276. This would later be called into question by Enoch Powell who suggested that Neave had agreed with the Official Unionist Party to at least one elected regional council following Thatcher’s election victory in 1979. See Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography, Volume One: Not for Turning* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 594 and PREM 19/280, Whitelaw minute to MT, 30 Apr. 1980.

¹³⁴ TNA UK, PREM 16/520, letter from Wright to Jordan, 11 Sept. 1975.

future meetings between her, Haughey and FitzGerald, particularly in the run up to the 1985 AIA (see chapter five). She thought that if intelligence improved, the violence would stop,

Mrs. Thatcher said that her impression was that the Army were not now getting the intelligence which they had previously received. The Secretary of State acknowledged that this was so in terms of necessary intelligence for waging an urban guerrilla campaign, but many of the murders now being committed could be traced back to one gun. Mrs. Thatcher commented that if our intelligence was good, no doubt that one gun could be picked up.

Thatcher concluded by discussing the letters she, and other members of the government, regularly received from the British public asking for a withdrawal from Northern Ireland. Tellingly, Thatcher remarked, 'People unfortunately did not realise that the result of a pull out would be much greater carnage ... The Conservative Party understood the need to protect innocent people in all parts of the United Kingdom.'¹³⁵ Thatcher also displayed her personal commitment to Northern Ireland.

During her time as Leader of the Opposition, Thatcher visited Northern Ireland every year (except for 1976, when confidential details of her visit were stolen). Her trips were meticulously organised, and were intended to reassure Unionists of her commitment to the province. Her three-day visit in 1978 was aimed at winning back support following their alliance with Labour before the general election of 1979. She was not afraid to visit the inner cities or border areas and in 1979, following the Mountbatten/Warrenpoint attacks, she made a point of visiting the army barracks at Crossmaglen (see chapter one). Her message was clear; I care, I am not afraid, I will help. It is apparent that in the early stages of her leadership, Thatcher displayed a dedication to the province that is stark when compared with her predecessors. However, from the outset her commitment to the region saw her and her advisors become a primary target.

Neave died in April 1979 when the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) planted a bomb under his car. The fact that the bomb was detonated in the Palace of Westminster shook

¹³⁵ TNA UK, PREM 16/520, letter from Wright to Jordan, 11 Sept. 1975.

the political establishment to its core.¹³⁶ It was a violent death for the decorated war hero, and it took its toll on his *protégé*. Thatcher wrote that she ‘... felt only stunned. The full grief would come later. With it came also anger that this man- my friend- who had shrugged off so much danger in his life should be murdered by someone worse than a common criminal.’¹³⁷ Neave was primed to become Secretary of State on Thatcher’s election.¹³⁸ Neave was dedicated to the defeat of terrorism and Thatcher had confidence in him, ‘his intelligence contacts, proven physical courage and shrewdness amply qualified him for this testing and largely thankless task.’¹³⁹ Thatcher commented that the Ulster Unionists knew they had strong support in both her and Neave. She made similar promises about Southern Rhodesia, but as it turned out this was only to please the right-wing enthusiasts within the party. In reality, she adopted a ‘hands-off’ approach when it came to the Lancaster House agreement, and throughout her premiership, as this thesis will show, she was also comfortable to hand over Northern Ireland policy to a team of appointed advisors.¹⁴⁰ Thatcher was ‘temperamentally a unionist of the Powell stripe. She shared his desire for military victory, and even for integration,’ but by the time she became Prime Minister in 1979, ‘The new Conservative government abandoned the notion of ‘integration’.¹⁴¹ Neave’s death would have a marked impact on her attitude to security, terrorism, Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations.¹⁴²

Conclusion

Ireland has been subject to British political and military intervention since the twelfth century.¹⁴³ Violent opposition to British rule was often met with military action, ‘interspersed

¹³⁶ Stephen Kelly, “Please God, don’t let it be Airey”: The Assassination of Airey Neave, 29 March 1979,” *Thatcher Network*, 22 July 2018, <https://thatchernet.org/2018/07/22/the-assassination-of-airey-neave-by-dr-stephen-kelly/>.

¹³⁷ Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 434.

¹³⁸ Paul Routledge, *Public Servant, Secret Agent: The Elusive Life and Violent Death of Airey Neave* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), p. 8.

¹³⁹ Thatcher, *Path to Power*, p. 289.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Howe, ‘Decolonisation and Imperial Aftershocks: The Thatcher Years,’ in *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, p. 255. See also Emma Kilheeny, ‘Ministers Advise, Prime Minister’s Decide? Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and Policy Making During the Thatcher Years,’ PhD thesis, 2016, University of Manchester, Manchester for more on how Thatcher’s Ministers played a key role in forming Conservative Northern Ireland policy from 1979-1990.

¹⁴¹ Mulholland, ‘Just Another Country,’ pp. 198-199.

¹⁴² See Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. One*, Jonathan Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher: Power and Personality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) and Green, *Thatcher*.

¹⁴³ Although written from a Nationalist viewpoint, Cochrane’s book gives a well researched assessment of the political origins of The Troubles from 1690. Cochrane, *Northern Ireland*. See also Paul Bew, *The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for a detailed history of the major events that occurred in Ireland.

with phases involving the importance of people from England and Wales.’¹⁴⁴ Although tensions between Catholics and Protestants had been present for centuries beforehand, a policy of disengagement from Northern Ireland by successive British administrations from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century meant left the Conservative political elite with a attitude towards the region.¹⁴⁵ The 1921 Treaty, and the policy of partition that followed, effectively cut Northern Ireland off from mainland Britain. Relations broke down after 1922, and continued to steadily decline until Heath was forced to intervene due to the outbreak of The Troubles. Perhaps most telling is the fact that no Unionist MP held a government or cabinet position after 1921.¹⁴⁶ Northern Ireland issues were also banned from discussion in the Commons from 1923 onwards. Still, Unionist MP’s could claim to have some sway over election results. The Conservatives were returned in 1951 with Winston Churchill as Prime Minister thanks in part to the nine Unionist MP’s who claimed half of the government majority.¹⁴⁷ In February 1974, still reeling from Sunningdale, the Unionists turned Heath’s election ‘into a ... plebiscite which they won resoundingly.’¹⁴⁸

From 1885, the Conservative party were spurred to action in Northern Ireland due to an immediate crisis. ‘British people do not think much about Ireland,’ and it is clear that more often than not, Northern Ireland has been treated as a place apart.¹⁴⁹ Unionist identity began when a perceived link with mainland Britain was forged. This was strengthened by an ability to exclude Irish nationalism.¹⁵⁰ But relations between the Conservatives and the Ulster Unionists declined after partition. Thereafter, the Conservatives became ‘... conditional rather than emotive defenders of the Union.’¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ McAuley, *Very British Rebels*, p. 18.

¹⁴⁵ For a balanced view of elite politics in Ireland see Jackson, *Ireland*. See also Clodagh Harris, ‘Anglo-Irish Elite Cooperation and the Peace Process: The Impact of the EEC/EU,’ *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 12 (2001), pp. 203-214 for an assessment of the drift that occurred between the British and Irish governments.

¹⁴⁶ Please see Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball, *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁴⁷ Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon, Henry Patterson, *The State in Northern Ireland, 1921-72: Political Forces and Social Classes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 139.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 132.

¹⁴⁹ Mary J. Hickman, ‘I am but I am not? A View of/from Britain’ in *Britain and Ireland: Lives Entwined*, ed., by British Council Ireland (Dublin: British Council Ireland, 2005), p. 84.

¹⁵⁰ See the introductory chapter of Jackson, *The Ulster Party*.

¹⁵¹ Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, pp. 70-103.

Chapter 1

Jack Lynch, Charles J. Haughey and Margaret Thatcher, 1979-1981

I think he is a tough, clever, wily man, no friend of ours, but not, perhaps, actively, hostile. He is conscious of his shady past (and present!). Perhaps there is something in what one columnist wrote recently- that he is “Ireland’s answer to JR”.¹

It was a sunny August Bank Holiday in County Sligo when Lord Louis Mountbatten set out on his leisure boat to go fishing. Accompanying him were members of his family and a local boy who had been hired to assist on the boat. The police had warned Mountbatten about the threat the PIRA posed but he had ignored them. As Mountbatten and his guests set sail, the PIRA detonated the bomb they had stowed in the hold the night before. Mountbatten, his grandson and the local boy died in the blast and Baroness Brabourne died a few days later. The PIRA had just killed the patriarch of the Royal family.²

News of Mountbatten’s assassination reached the Parachute Regiment at Bessbrook near Newry where operations continued as normal. ‘A’ Company were on their way to relieve Support Company and had been ordered to travel by a particularly dangerous road. Narrow Water marked the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Irish side of the Clanrye River was covered in thick woodland that provided perfect cover for an ambush. As the first lorry passed the gate lodge of the castle, a bomb hidden in straw bales was detonated. The surviving soldiers opened fire and killed a tourist across the river. A medical team arrived at the site by helicopter, but it landed directly beside the second bomb. ‘B’ Company were sent to Narrow Water thirty minutes after the second explosion. It was a horrifying scene. The bombs had killed 18 soldiers, their body parts were strewn over the

¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, minute from Robin Haydon to Lord Carrington, 9 Apr. 1980.

² See Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten: The Official Biography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).

road, in the trees and in the water.³ The British public reacted with ‘anger, sadness and bewilderment.’⁴ If the INLA assassination of Airey Neave just before the general election in May 1979 had demonstrated forcefully to Thatcher that Northern Ireland would provide an enormous challenge, the events of August 1979 reinforced this. The PIRA had carried out two major operations in one day. The attackers at Warrenpoint were able to disappear into the Republic of Ireland, which was to provoke an immediate problem for Anglo- Irish relations.

This chapter will focus on the first years of Thatcher’s term in office in relation to Northern Ireland and Ireland. This chapter will focus primarily on Haughey and the Dublin as opposed to Thatcher and the London government. Thatcher’s outlook is not entirely ignored, however in order to set the scene and fully explain how relations between Haughey and Thatcher deteriorated, both personally and professionally, it is vital to understand how Haughey’s Northern Ireland policy developed during his first term. The significance of this chapter lies in the in-depth background information it offers. By delving into the files from the archives in Dublin and London, this thesis offers a greater understanding of the Atkins Talks and how its results were received by the governments in Dublin and London. This chapter also details the nerves both Haughey and Thatcher felt before they first met each other. Both Haughey and Thatcher were meticulously briefed before their Anglo-Irish meetings, as the rest of this thesis will show. However, for their first summit, the preparation was particularly thorough. Both sides outlined basic information about their counterpart, including their education. What is surprising is the personal detail that was offered about each leader. This chapter will also detail the increasing media interest surrounding the Haughey-Thatcher meetings. These reports could prove surprisingly influential over Anglo-Irish relations. Although both Dublin and London wanted to move away from mega-phone diplomacy, this chapter details how media reports could still sour Anglo-Irish relations.

³ Mike Jackson, *Soldier: The Autobiography* (London: Corgi, 2008), pp. 152-161.

⁴ *The Times*, 21 Dec. 1979.

On entering office, Thatcher met the Irish Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, twice before he was replaced by Charles J. Haughey.⁵ Lynch had not made a good impression on Thatcher. As well as being shy by nature, Lynch was tired. He had had a long career in the Dáil having first been elected as a TD in 1948.⁶ He had started to pass responsibility for day-to-day government business to unelected civil servants. The events of August 1979 were to prove important catalysts for Haughey's leadership bid. Relations between Lynch and Thatcher were rocked by the Mountbatten/Warrenpoint attacks. Notable backbench TDs, Síle de Valera and Bill Loughnane, railed against rumours of increased rights of overflight of the Irish border by the British security forces in Northern Ireland. In the November Cork by-election Fianna Fáil's seat was taken by Fine Gael, a humiliating defeat in Lynch's home county.⁷ Lynch had had enough. The timing of his resignation though appeared to be strongly motivated by a determination to give George Colley, his preferred successor the best chance.⁸ It was not to be.

Haughey became leader of Fianna Fáil and Taoiseach. He tried to launch an Anglo-Irish conference to formalize and regulate contact between the Republic of Ireland and the UK. But Haughey continually alluded to a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and unity by consent. Therefore, his idea was out of the question. The similar 'Atkins talks' (officially the 'Constitutional Conference') comprising the DUP, Alliance and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), went ahead under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State, Humphrey Atkins.⁹ The Conference failed to produce any proposals; but the talks

⁵ Jack Lynch, leader of Fianna Fáil 1966-1979, Taoiseach 1966-1973, 1977-1979. Charles J. Haughey, leader of Fianna Fáil 1979-1992, Taoiseach 1979-1981, 1982, 1987-1992.

⁶ See John A. Murphy, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975) for a damning verdict.

⁷ Síle de Valera, granddaughter of Éamon de Valera. Fianna Fáil TD 1977-2007. William 'Bill' Loughnane, Fianna Fáil TD 1969-1982.

⁸ George Colley, Fianna Fáil TD 1961-1983. Tánaiste 1977-1981.

⁹ Humphrey Atkins, Lord Colnbrook, Conservative. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1979-1981.

The DUP is a right-wing party founded in 1971. Its founder, Ian Paisley, also headed the Free Presbyterian Church. The party is socially conservative. The DUP continually opposed any move to involve nationalists or the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland affairs and often resorted to traditional protests to demonstrate this (see chpt. 6). The DUP became increasingly militant as the 1980s progressed. Paisley created a loyalist militia known as the 'Third Force' in 1981, and in 1986 Deputy-Leader, Peter Robinson, led the invasion of a town across the Irish border. The SDLP is a democratic nationalist party founded in 1970 by Gerry Fitt, party leader 1970-1979, John Hume, party leader from 1979-2001, Paddy Devlin, MLA for Belfast Fall 1969-1972, Seamus Mallon, who Haughey elected as Senator in 1982 and Austin Currie, who served as party whip until he moved to the Republic of Ireland and joined Fine Gael in 1989. The SDLP promotes the unification of Ireland by peaceful means, but its popularity declined in the aftermath of the 1981 Hunger Strikes which saw the emergence of Sinn Féin (see chpt. 3). The Alliance Party, founded in 1970 is Liberal and centrist. Alliance believes in the maintenance of the union for economic reasons.

gave Thatcher's Government an idea of where the main parties, with the exception of the UUP, stood and how they could proceed.¹⁰ Haughey and Thatcher met throughout 1980 and 1981 with varying degrees of success. The post-summit press conferences and *communiqués* proved to be Haughey's downfall. Added to this his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Lenihan, called for the British to withdraw from Northern Ireland.¹¹ Thatcher had previously defended Haughey but she realised he had 'hoodwinked' her. Before he could regain her trust, he was voted out of the Taoiseach's office. His first term was as dramatic as it was short.

'Rise and follow Charlie': Haughey's Journey from the Backbenches to the Taoiseach's Office

When Thatcher became Prime Minister in May 1979, Jack Lynch was two years into his second stint as Taoiseach. A modest, demure man, he had served longer as Taoiseach than anyone apart from Éamon de Valera. He had been very popular and his election victory in 1977 was a personal triumph. He had continued the economic modernisation of Ireland and presided over the single most important event in Irish governance since independence - the accession, along with Britain, to the European Economic Community (EEC). While his policies on Northern Ireland had been confused, he had increasingly cracked down on the PIRA and sought solutions with London.

Lynch had first met Thatcher on 10 May 1979. The discussion about Northern Ireland was brief though Lynch emphasised that Dublin had taken strong measures against terrorism, including introducing special courts.¹² Lynch had also decried the views of Jim Molyneaux, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, that the Republic of Ireland was a 'haven for terrorists.' Lynch advised Thatcher to exercise caution when making public statements on security. Lynch felt that some of the statements Roy Mason, former Northern Ireland Secretary, had

¹⁰ The UUP, sometimes referred to as the Official Unionist Party (OUP), is the oldest of the unionist parties. Founded in 1905, the UUP is a centre-right wing party, more liberal than the DUP but still against the unification of Ireland. Unlike the DUP, the UUP were against militant action in the late 1980s but were forced to go along with the DUP as a member of the un-official unionist alliance (see chpt. 6).

¹¹ Brian Lenihan Senior, Fianna Fáil. Minister for Foreign Affairs 1973, 1979-1981, 1987-1989, Minister for Defence 1989-1990, Tánaiste 1987-1990.

¹² NAI, TAOIS 2009/135/704, Lynch meeting with MT, 10 May 1979. A summary of this meeting is also stored in NAI, TAOIS 2009/135/703. London's record can be found in TNA UK, PREM 19/79.

made had provoked violence.¹³ Lynch had hoped to invite Thatcher to Dublin for talks in October 1979 but the events of late August changed matters and Lynch proposed to go to London to represent the government at Lord Mountbatten's funeral.¹⁴

The meetings on 5 September, which included a *tête-à-tête* between Lynch and Thatcher, were dominated by security.¹⁵ Thatcher used the opportunity provided by the recent events to pressure Lynch into more cooperation against terrorism. During their private meeting, where only their appointed note takers were present, Thatcher told Lynch she was anxious to 'stamp out terrorism' which posed a threat to democracy. Lynch expanded that terrorism could also have repercussions for the economy. Thatcher told Lynch that existing security co-operation 'had to be improved.'¹⁶ Lynch emphasised that such cooperation was already there and Dublin had 'enacted a code of legislation in Ireland against terrorism which was stronger, so far as he was aware, than that of any other European country.' Thatcher conceded there was cooperation but she wanted enhanced cooperation. She drew Lynch's attention to the inadequacies of the current prosecution system. She wanted increased and permanent liaison between the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the Garda. She concluded with a suggestion that would cause Lynch no end of trouble. Thatcher wanted overflight rights without specific permission 10 to 15 km over the border so that British helicopters could continue to track suspects and guide the Republic's security forces to them. Lynch, surprisingly, was most receptive to the overflights and was more robust on defending existing co-operation between the Garda and the RUC.¹⁷ The election of Charles Haughey to the office of Taoiseach in December 1979 was partly down to rumours that Lynch had gone too far with Thatcher in security cooperation.

The Fianna Fáil leadership election of 1979 gave Haughey an unexpected opportunity towards his long-held goals of becoming party leader and Taoiseach.¹⁸ It was a remarkable

¹³ iBid., Roy Mason, Lord Mason of Barnsley, Labour. Secretary for Defence 1974-1976, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1976-1979, Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1979.

¹⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2009/135/704, Lynch meeting with MT, 30 Aug. 1979

¹⁵ London's records for the meetings on 5 September are in TNA UK, PREM 19/79 and TNA UK, PREM 19/81. Dublin's records are in NAI, TAOIS 2009/135/701 and NAI, TAOIS 2009/135/704.

¹⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/79, MT *tête-à-tête* with Lynch, 5 Sept. 1979.

¹⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2009/135/704, Lynch meeting with MT, 5 Sept. 1979.

¹⁸ Haughey never wrote an autobiography, nor did he appoint an official biographer, but there is an extensive collection of biographies. Bruce Arnold, *Haughey: His Life and Unlucky Deeds* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), Stephen Collins, *The*

recovery of a once promising career that had unraveled due to the Arms crisis of 1970, when the discovery of an attempt to import arms to nationalists in Northern Ireland by leading Fianna Fáil Ministers provoked the worst governmental crisis since WW2. Haughey was first elected to the Dáil in 1957 and rose rapidly through the ranks thanks to an advantageous marriage. He was the son-in-law of Sean Lemass, Taoiseach from 1959-1966.¹⁹ Haughey embodied a new breed of modern Irish politician that characterized Fianna Fáil politics in the 1950s. Haughey was committed to a new open Ireland that saw foreign investment as necessary in order to modernize and grow the Irish economy. Fianna Fáil's traditional policy of protectionism was abandoned in the late 1950s. Haughey was a highly regarded Minister for Justice, then Agriculture and from 1966, a dynamic Minister for Finance. He had been joint favourite with George Colley, a more traditional Fianna Fáil figure for the succession to Lemass in 1966. But while admired he was also seen as venal and greedy. Most of the Fianna Fáil party breathed a sigh of relief when a compromise candidate, the safe Lynch, emerged. Many in Fianna Fáil, particularly the more austere traditionalists, watched Haughey with a jaundiced eye.

Along with a successful Ministerial career, Haughey had apparently enriched himself through unclear means from the most modest of beginnings.²⁰ He was the son of a retired Irish Army officer from Londonderry. This link to Northern Ireland, according to one recent study, greatly influenced his views on The Troubles.²¹ This assessment must be balanced by the fact that Haughey had had little hesitation as Minister for Justice in using internment and the draconian Offenses against the State Act to make the PIRA's Border campaign 1956-1962 unsustainable.²² It is hard to see in the record that Haughey paid much attention to

Haughey File: The Unprecedented Career and Last Years of the Boss (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1992), Frank Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach: Irish Politics From Behind Closed Doors* (Dublin: Penguin, 2005), T. Ryle Dwyer, *Haughey's Forty Years of Controversy* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2005) and *Short Fellow: A Biography of Charles J. Haughey* (Dublin: Marino, 2001), Stephen Kelly, 'A Failed Political Entity': *Charles Haughey and the Northern Ireland Question, 1945-1992* (Kildare: Merrion Press, 2016), Conor Lenihan, *Haughey: Prince of Power* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 2015), Justin O'Brien, *The Modern Prince: Charles J. Haughey and the Quest for Power* (Dublin: Merlin, 2002). Haughey's Northern Ireland advisor, Martin Mansergh, compiled a comprehensive title that covers all of Haughey's key speeches from 1957-1986. Martin Mansergh (eds), *The Spirit of the Nation: The Speeches and Statements of Charles J. Haughey* (Cork: Mercier, 1986).

¹⁹ Sean Lemass, Haughey's Father-in-law. Leader of Fianna Fáil 1959-1966, Taoiseach 1959-1966.

²⁰ Haughey would have to answer these rumours in the Moriarty Tribunal of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Tribunal continued after Haughey's death in 2006. See Elaine Byrne, *Political Corruption in Ireland 1922-2010: A Crooked Harp?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) for more on the Tribunal.

²¹ See Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*.

²² See especially Barry Flynn, *Soldiers of Folly: The IRA Border Campaign 1956-1962* (Cork: Collins, 2009).

Northern Ireland.²³ Indeed, the economic strategy of the Northern Irish government of Terence O'Neill seemed to demonstrate a conjunction of two modernizing governments that wished to leave the past behind.²⁴ Economic prosperity was more important than old struggles over partition. However, what the modernisers on both sides of the border could not foresee was that the continued unfairness which the minority community in Northern Ireland experienced was a ticking time bomb.

The economic balance of Northern Ireland remained firmly skewed to the protestant eastern counties. Little effort was made to deal with Catholic grievances about the economy and infrastructure, the police or, and perhaps most importantly, gerrymandering and the restricted franchise in local government.²⁵ Nonetheless, the riots of August 1969 in Derry and Belfast caught Lynch's government by surprise. What rapidly emerged was a split in the Cabinet between those who wanted intervention - there was a lot of ballad singing apparently - and those who were concerned that such a move would cause a wider conflagration that would spiral out of control. Nonetheless, the views of Haughey, Kevin Boland and Neil Blaney almost certainly hardened, at least rhetorically, the Irish government's policy in the autumn of 1969.²⁶ What happened next remains the subject of much speculation.

In May 1970, Haughey, then Minister of Finance, was fired by Lynch after being charged with conspiring to import guns into Ireland for potential use by Citizen Defense Committees' in Northern Ireland. A leading PIRA member, John Kelly, was one of those involved.²⁷ How much Lynch and other members of the government knew about the arms import remains unclear. Indeed, it was the Garda and Secretary of the Department of Justice, Peter Berry, who on discovery of the plan forced Lynch's hand. Three members of his Cabinet, Haughey, Neil Blaney and Michael O' Morain, the incapable Minister for Justice,

²³ According to the collection of his public speeches and statements, before he was elected Taoiseach Haughey made two speeches dedicated entirely to Northern Ireland. The first at Queen's University on 12 Nov. 1962, the second at a Fianna Fáil constituency dinner on 19 Nov. 1975. See Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*.

²⁴ Terence O'Neill, Baron O'Neill of the Maine. Leader of the UUP 1963-1969, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland 1963-1969.

²⁵ See especially Graham Gudgin, 'Discrimination in Housing and Employment Under the Stormont Administration,' in *The Northern Ireland Question: Nationalism, Unionism and Partition*, ed., by Brian Barton and Patrick J. Roche (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). For a wider picture of the discrimination the minority community faced in Northern Ireland see J. Brewer and G. Higgins, *Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland, 1600-1998: The Mote and the Beam* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

²⁶ Kevin Boland, TD 1957-1970, Minister for Defence 1957-1961. Neil T.C. Blaney, TD 1948-1995.

²⁷ *The Guardian*, 14 June 2006.

were fired while a fourth Kevin Boland, resigned. Two trials - the first was a mistrial - saw Haughey acquitted.²⁸ What the trial indicated was that the level of knowledge in the government about the arms import went much further than Haughey. The testimony of Jim Gibbons, the Minister for Defence, was particularly problematic.²⁹ In the short term, it did little for Haughey as the Fianna Fáil party rallied around Lynch. Haughey, unlike Blaney and Boland who left Fianna Fáil, voted confidence in Lynch. Haughey's reputation was tarnished but he had survived. In 1973, Lynch allowed him to remain a Fianna Fáil candidate in the election and a slow and remarkable recovery began. Blaney and Boland, on the other hand, would never return to the fold. Their careers as senior politicians were finished.

Haughey loitered around the back benches of the Dáil and worked tirelessly to fulfill his ambition of becoming Taoiseach. He worked the 'chicken and chips' circuit at Fianna Fáil meetings using his infamous charm to get people on his side. This experience would have been humiliating for Haughey. Frank Dunlop, government press secretary during Haughey's first term in office, wrote how the meetings usually had a small turn out, 'the discussion was stilted and the food, if any, diabolical.'³⁰ But this was what Haughey was good at. He was a charismatic man who had a way of 'getting people on his side.'³¹ Remarkably, he was restored to the front bench of the party in the mid 1970s as it languished in opposition. It was widely expected that the Fine Gael-Labour coalition would win the next election in 1977. As it happened Lynch won in a landslide. This triumph disguised a number of problems. It created a pool of backbenchers in the Fianna Fáil party who held vulnerable seats and who were open to the blandishments and populism of Haughey, who also used his position as Minister for Social Welfare to become the go-to-guy for Ministers with enquiries from their constituents. He carried around a little black book of problems which, once solved, he took credit for. All this was in stark contrast with Lynch's hands off approach. Moreover, the 1977 Fianna Fáil manifesto called for massive tax cuts to stimulate the economy. After a brief burst of growth in 1978, world conditions savagely changed in 1979 and the Irish government began to run increasingly unsustainable deficits. Meanwhile, the violence in

²⁸ For more on the Arms Trial see Justin O'Brien, *The Arms Trial* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2000).

²⁹ Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, pp. 62-84.

³⁰ Frank Dunlop, Head of Irish Government's Information Service and Press Secretary 1977-1982.

³¹ Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach*, p. 33.

Northern Ireland continued, albeit at a lower level than in the early and mid-1970s. Economic and political stagnation led to calls for change from the back benches. Following Colley's decision to increase taxes on agricultural produce, support for Fianna Fáil at the polls fell to its lowest ebb in the party's history. The June 1979 European Elections saw Fianna Fáil narrowly beat Fine Gael to take five of a possible fifteen seats. Haughey's leadership campaign was launched quietly by the so-called 'gang of five' (made up by Albert Reynolds, Jackie Fahey, Seán Doherty, Tom McEllistrim and Mark Killilea) with Lynch's Northern Ireland policy, or lack thereof, as the basis of attack.³² Lynch underestimated Haughey's ambition and the dedication of his supporters.³³

The leadership election took place on 7 December 1979 and was contested by Haughey and Colley. Writing years later, Fine Gael leader Garret FitzGerald described the bullying tactics the Haughey camp adopted during the ballot.³⁴ According to FitzGerald, several Fine Gael TD's complained that Haughey's men intimidated party members. Although FitzGerald was told that privacy booths were used, during the walk to the ballot box Haughey's supporters demanded confirmation of a vote in favour of their leader, otherwise you 'would be assumed to have voted for Colley and would subsequently be treated accordingly.'³⁵ Haughey won the leadership contest by 44 votes to Colley's 38. Haughey became Taoiseach.³⁶

RTÉ's political correspondent Sean Dunigan labelled Haughey's victory as 'the greatest comeback since Lazarus.'³⁷ Other journalists focused on the new Taoiseach's Northern Ireland policy. He had avoided outlining his aims, due largely to the Arms Crisis, but this had not gone unnoticed. Haughey's response was brief, 'this is the first time I have been asked in this position, and up to now the responsibility for making Fianna Fáil party

³² Albert Reynolds, Fianna Fáil TD 1977-1992, Leader of Fianna Fáil 1992-1994, Taoiseach 1992-1994. John 'Jackie' Fahey, Fianna Fáil TD 1977-1992. Seán Doherty, Fianna Fáil Minister for Justice 1982. Tom McEllistrim Junior, Fianna Fáil TD 1969-1992. Mark Killilea Junior, Fianna Fáil TD 1977-1982.

³³ Dwyer, *Haughey's Forty Years of Controversy*, pp. 181-182.

³⁴ Dr. Garret FitzGerald, academic and leader of Fine Gael, 1977-1987. Taoiseach 1981-1982, 1982-1987.

³⁵ Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life* (London: MacMillan, 1992), pp. 338-339.

³⁶ For more on how Haughey became Taoiseach see Stephen Collins, *The Power Game: Fianna Fáil Since Lemass* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2000), Dick Walsh, *Inside Fianna Fáil* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1986) and Whelan, *Fianna Fáil*.

³⁷ RTÉ, 20 Feb. 2012.

statements in these matters belonged to others.³⁸ His election as Taoiseach meant that he needed to expand on his policy. He soon voiced his aspiration for a united Ireland.³⁹

The Atkins Talks

In November 1979 Westminster published a White Paper that proposed the introduction of a consultative conference involving all the Northern Ireland parties.⁴⁰ It was hoped that this approach would begin a dialogue which would provide a basic policy framework.⁴¹ The Conference was chaired by Atkins and ran from January to March 1980.⁴² The Conference was a step-away from the Conservative's 1979 election manifesto, which had promised a strict policy of integration, and was therefore warmly received by politicians in Ireland.⁴³

FitzGerald told Robin Haydon, the British Ambassador to Ireland, how pleased he was to see the Conference go ahead.⁴⁴ 'He was very happy to see some movement on the North at last. He also thought that it was encouraging and remarkable that Ian Paisley and John Hume, future leader of the SDLP, were 'establishing a good relationship ...'⁴⁵ Haughey also praised the Conference and added, '...pending the withdrawal or disengagement of Britain from Irish affairs ... we should pursue the peaceful coming together of the communities by means of interim institutions. Any such interim institution would be welcome.'⁴⁶ Haughey's speech aggravated the unionist camp. Paisley asked to meet Thatcher. Gerry Fitt, leader of the SDLP, forewarned Thatcher that Paisley would use the

³⁸ British Universities Film and Video Council Database (BUFVCD), 'Charles Haughey is new Taoiseach,' undated (circa. Dec. 1979).

³⁹ Stephen Kelly, 'Fresh Evidence from the Archives: The Genesis of Charles James Haughey's Attitude to Northern Ireland,' *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 23 (2012).

⁴⁰ The Government of Northern Ireland: a working paper for a conference, Nov. 1979, CAIN, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsocmd7763.htm>. White Papers are policy documents which announce future legislation before they have been debated by the House of Commons. Green Papers precede White Papers and set out policy ideas that are still at a formative stage.

⁴¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/83, No. 10 record of conversation, 14 Nov. 1979.

⁴² TNA UK, PREM 19/280, speaking note on Northern Ireland conference, 25 Mar. 1980.

⁴³ It became obvious that the Conservative's integrationist policy was an attempt to win the support of the unionists at Westminster. See Paul Dixon, *Northern Ireland: The Politics of War and Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 172.

⁴⁴ Sir Robin Haydon, British Diplomat. Ambassador to Ireland 1976-1980.

⁴⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/279, Haydon 453 to FCO of 17 Dec. 1979. John Hume, founder member and leader of the SDLP, 1979-2001. Hume is widely recognised as one of the key architects of the Northern Ireland peace process. He received a joint Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 along with UUP leader David Trimble.

⁴⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/279, comments from Haughey's press conference, 7 Dec. 1979.

meeting ‘purely as a publicity stunt.’⁴⁷ The conversation would be crucial. Paisley was the representative of ‘grass roots Protestant opinion’ so the current atmosphere on the ground could be ascertained. He could also give Thatcher insight into how politics in Northern Ireland worked.⁴⁸ However, his emotive language irritated Thatcher.

Paisley claimed that he ‘represented the most slandered, most abused, most betrayed people in the United Kingdom: The Protestants of Northern Ireland.’ Thatcher replied that her visit to Northern Ireland that August represented her ‘own personal commitment’ to the province. She hoped Paisley ‘would say nothing that might put co-operation between Britain and the Republic in jeopardy.’⁴⁹ Paisley was a powerful figure but he was a liability. He wanted ‘to build himself up as “leader of the people of Northern Ireland”’.⁵⁰ His success at the European Elections in 1979 bolstered his confidence.⁵¹ Thatcher was warned that his ambitions had ‘changed sharply.’ The Government found that he changed from ‘a wrecker’ to an ambitious power seeker. ‘His immediate ambition is to supplant the UUP as the main voice of the Unionist tradition ...’⁵² Paisley faced an obstacle to this aim.

There was no concrete unionist plan on how to govern Northern Ireland, particularly so given the UUP’s absence from the initial Atkins talks. The only thing the unionist parties agreed on was ‘their aversion to incorporation into a united Ireland.’⁵³ There was also suspicion towards the Conservative party. As discussed in the introduction, time and again British Conservatives had used the Irish issue to their political advantage. Within recent memory, a Conservative Government had dissolved Stormont and ‘brought out the hated Sunningdale agreement.’⁵⁴ It was essential for Thatcher to reassure unionists that there was no sell-out, ‘Reassuring Protestant Unionists is not, however, a one-off job, nor has it been

⁴⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/83, No. 10 record of conversation, 13 Nov. 1979. Gerry Fitt, Lord Fitt, founder of and leader of the SDLP, 1970-1979.

⁴⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/83, memo from Hopkins to Alexander, 13 Nov. 1979.

⁴⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/83, No. 10 record of conversation, 14 Nov. 1979.

⁵⁰ It was later suggested that Paisley wanted ‘an independent Northern Ireland in which he would be in absolute control.’ TNA UK, PREM 19/502, No. 10 record of conversation, 12 Feb. 1981.

⁵¹ Paisley topped the poll and claimed one of three seats.

⁵² PRONI, CENT 1/8/8, memo by A. Huckle on the 1979 European Assembly election results in Northern Ireland.

⁵³ TNA UK, PREM 19/502, letter from Hopkins to Alexander, 10 June 1980. MT noted beside this point, ‘what a revealing way of putting it.’

⁵⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/502, notes for MT from Gow, 16 Feb. 1981.

at any time this century.’⁵⁵ Advice on how she could achieve this was sent from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

When Thatcher became Prime Minister, she appointed Maurice Oldfield, former director of MI6, with overseeing security and intelligence-gathering operations in Northern Ireland.⁵⁶ In October 1979 (after only a week in his post) Oldfield wrote an advisory paper titled ‘But me no Buts.’ After reading through the official summaries and notes, Oldfield noticed a pattern in the language adopted. Officials continually used the word ‘but,’ “Our personal relations are very good but ...”; “We have no difficulty in agreeing at the operational level but there are questions of higher policy”; “Of course the task is clear but ...” Oldfield suggested using ‘and’ instead of ‘but’ as the latter had negative connotations. This would change the tone of these meetings. T.E. Utley, a respected Tory journalist and advisor, agreed with this assessment.⁵⁷ Based on his experiences with the unionists (Utley stood as a UUP candidate in North Antrim in the general election of February 1974 but was defeated by Paisley), he reported that there was ‘total disillusionment with British policy ... According to their interpretation of events, negotiations had been started with Dublin in order to provoke a fierce reaction in Northern Ireland which would prove that the province was ungovernable and thus prepare the way for independence.’⁵⁸ The Atkins Talks also faced opposition from Westminster.

Enoch Powell, UUP MP for South Down, asked to meet Thatcher to discuss the new Conference.⁵⁹ He felt that talks contradicted an agreement between the UUP and Atkins predecessor as Secretary of State, Neave. Powell gave specific details of the time and date this agreement was reached. He said the UUP had promised to support the Conservatives at Westminster to bring down Labour. He did not divulge Neave’s specific plans but insinuated that Thatcher was aware of them.⁶⁰ Powell believed that the talks were a search for a

⁵⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/499, letter from Hopkins to Atkins, 2 Apr. 1981.

⁵⁶ Maurice Oldfield, Director of Secret Intelligence Service or MI6 1973-1978, Head of Northern Ireland Security and Intelligence 1979.

⁵⁷ T.E. Utley, Tory Philosopher and writer. Journalist for *The Times*, *The Observer*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Stood unsuccessfully as UUP candidate in 1974.

⁵⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/499, record of a meeting of the Northern Ireland Committee, 5 Mar. 1981.

⁵⁹ Professor Enoch Powell, UUP MP 1974-1987.

⁶⁰ There is no written evidence of such a plan, nor did MT ever divulge to her party if she knew about it. Neave’s biographer maintained that he ‘had kept his cards pretty close to his chest’ but that his Northern Ireland strategy probably involved ‘a

“glittering prize” in Northern Ireland. He advised it was safer to maintain distance, and allow ‘passions to subside and events to take their course.’ For Roy Harrington (private secretary in the NIO) the implication from Powell was clear; ‘... the Government’s policy towards Northern Ireland would be a Unionist policy leading towards integration rather than devolution.’ Harrington’s superior, the Under Secretary of State, Kenneth Stowe, agreed and told Powell that ‘Ministers judged that it was timely to make a move,’ an argument that did ‘not make much impact on Mr. Powell.’⁶¹ During a meeting with Thatcher and her parliamentary private secretary, Ian Gow, in May 1980, Powell made two further arguments against the talks.⁶² First, movement on a constitutional change in Northern Ireland did not need to happen immediately. Although the Government wanted to make a significant move, Direct Rule would cause ‘no outcry in Ulster.’ Second, Powell argued that an Assembly could function without an Executive. Gow disagreed with this,

If there was to be an Assembly, without an Executive, that Assembly would act irresponsibly, because it would have no responsibility. It would discuss any and all matters. It would be hostile and critical. Its criticism would be destructive. It would diminish the role of Ulster MPs at Westminster.⁶³

Powell could not dissuade Thatcher from disbanding the talks. The participants had so far worked well together, and by the third session some progress had been made.

Conference delegates were reported to have ‘reached the heart of the matter: the role to be assigned to the minority community in a devolved administration.’ Alliance favoured a committee-style system made up of equal numbers of each community. The SDLP preferred a power-sharing arrangement, similar to Sunningdale. The DUP was willing to introduce

twin-pack approach continuing direct rule, with some devolution of powers to local councils, backed up by a ruthless suppression of the IRA.’ MT’s biographer, Charles Moore, who had access to unreleased material from the Cabinet office as well as information from a pool of contemporaries, wrote that Neave was an ‘integrationist,’ and that his tough security views became central to MT’s policy (this will be discussed throughout this thesis). See TNA UK, PREM 19/280, letter from Harrington to Alexander, 18 Apr. 1980, Routledge, *Public Servant, Secret Agent* and Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. One*.

⁶¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, meeting with Powell, 15 Apr. 1980. In November 1979, Powell suggested that MT and Lynch had struck a secret deal allowing Dublin involvement in Northern Ireland in return for cross-border security assistance. The NIO wrote that Powell was ‘looking hard for conspiracies and hints of deception.’ See TNA UK, PREM 19/83. Kenneth Stowe, British civil servant. Permanent Under-Secretary of the NIO 1979-1981.

⁶² Ian Gow, Conservative and unofficial Northern Ireland advisor to MT. Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister 1979-1983. Killed by PIRA car bomb in 1990.

⁶³ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, note of a meeting held at the House of Commons on 1 May 1980.

some safeguards for the minority in their majority rule model, but did not set out what these safeguards would be. Harrington reported that although the main parties were still ‘a long way apart,’ they wanted to continue talking.⁶⁴ By the sixth week, Michael Hopkins of the NIO told Michael Alexander (Thatcher’s Private Secretary on Overseas Affairs) that the position of each party had become clear, but there was still no ‘sense of readiness to explore middle ground (if indeed there is middle ground to explore).’⁶⁵ At the final session it was apparent that until a formal paper was produced, any further suggestions would be hypothetical. The delegates had put forward their ideas, now it was up to London to outline its position. Atkins suggested to Thatcher, who agreed, that a next steps paper should be prepared.⁶⁶

While speaking privately to an un-named member of staff from the British Embassy, who had been sent by Haydon, FitzGerald emphasised the need for swift action following the adjournment of the talks,

Once the parties’ informal views had been ascertained the British Government should then impose a solution with great firmness. His view was that a reiteration of the principles of Sunningdale or something like it might enable the SDLP to acquiesce in a solution which involved weighted majority voting.⁶⁷

Westminster published the White Paper in July.⁶⁸ Two options were outlined, power-sharing between elected parties, or majority rule. Unionists, concerned that their majority would be threatened by power-sharing, rejected it. The UUP was hopeful of a majority rule model with no concessions to the minority. It realised that this option was impossible so it began to look at an integrated model,

They hope to proceed down this path via the failure of the Government’s initiative to restore devolved government, followed by implementation of the Government’s

⁶⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/279, letter from Harrington to Alexander, 31 Jan. 1980.

⁶⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/279, letter from Hopkins to Alexander, 7 Mar. 1980. Sir Michael Alexander, British diplomat with an Irish Father. Private Secretary (Foreign Affairs) to the Prime Minister 1979-1981.

⁶⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/279, letter from Stowe to Armstrong, 7 Mar. 1980. See also TNA UK, PREM 19/280.

⁶⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, Haydon 127 to NIO of 31 Mar. 1980.

⁶⁸ The Government of Northern Ireland: Proposals for Future Discussion, July 1980, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsocmd7950.htm>.

manifesto commitment to strengthen local government which they would hope to dominate as they did before 1970.⁶⁹

Non-Unionists disagreed with majority rule. They preferred the current system that guaranteed the *status quo* unionist majority. The impact of the Atkins talks, therefore, was limited.⁷⁰ In November Atkins told the Commons that no agreement existed between the Northern Ireland parties.⁷¹ London remained committed to finding a solution.

The Queen's speech, which is written by Ministers from the majority party on her behalf, pledged that the government would continue to seek arrangements for "Northern Ireland that will better meet the needs of all its people".⁷² In a briefing paper for Haughey's upcoming meeting with Thatcher in December, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) advised Haughey that it was 'apparent from recent contacts at official level with the British that they are now pessimistic on the prospects for setting up a devolved administration or local assembly and that further attempts in this direction have been postponed until next year.'⁷³ Now was Haughey's chance to discuss his idea with Thatcher.

Haughey's Search for the 'glittering prize'

Although Haughey had reiterated Fianna Fáil's traditional stance on a united Ireland, there had been a shift in tactic. Whereas traditionally nationalists had demanded the British to withdraw from Northern Ireland, Haughey wanted to pursue intergovernmental talks. Dublin and London would come together to discuss a solution to Northern Ireland.⁷⁴ In early 1980, Haughey discussed his intention to work with London to 'find a formula that will lift the

⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/281, paper on the Ulster Unionist movement, 15 June 1980.

⁷⁰ Historians agree that the Atkins talks were a failure. See Eamonn O'Kane, *Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland Since 1980: The Totality of Relationships* (London: Routledge, 2007), Henry Patterson and Eric P. Kauffman, *Unionism and Orangeism in Northern Ireland Since 1945: The Decline of the Loyal Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), Eamonn O'Kane, 'British Government Policy Post 1974: Learning Slowly Between Sunningdales?' in *Sunningdale, the Ulster Worker's Council Strike and the Struggle for Democracy in Northern Ireland*, ed., by David McCann and Cilliam McGrattan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017) and Kenneth Bloomfield, *A Tragedy of Errors: The Government and Misgovernment of Northern Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

⁷¹ 'Constitutional development,' Commons sitting of 27 Nov. 1980, Hansard HC [553-690] cc. 557-60. This was admitted in private in June. See TNA UK, PREM 19/281.

⁷² 'Queen's speech,' Commons sitting of 20 November 1980, Hansard HC [1-110] cc. 4-6.

⁷³ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1617, Northern Ireland conference and general political situation, Dec. 1980.

⁷⁴ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, Brian Lenihan meeting with Humphrey Atkins, 13 Oct. 1980. See John Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 117-145 for more on the shift in nationalism in the 1980s. Haughey returned to a traditional nationalist stance following the fall out with MT during the Falklands War, and especially during FitzGerald's New Ireland Forum initiative. See chpt. four.

situation to a new plane.’⁷⁵ It was a bold scheme and Haughey needed to be assertive. After a meeting with Brian Lenihan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in April, Atkins reported that Haughey was personally in control of Northern Ireland policy and that the DFA was ‘somewhat frozen out.’⁷⁶ Stowe later commented that Haughey’s officials seemed ‘hard put to it to express a clear view.’⁷⁷ The lack of DFA briefing began to show in Haughey’s speeches.

During some speeches, Haughey called for Westminster to consent to Irish unity, but then he talked of the benefits of an Anglo-Irish initiative.⁷⁸ In April, in his first interview with *The Irish Times* as Taoiseach, Haughey said that he was ‘hopeful’ of a united Ireland in his lifetime. He went on to say, ‘What is needed is a coherent, mature political approach and an abundance of patience, understanding and generosity.’⁷⁹ In June, the day after the incredibly successful Teapot Summit where Haughey gifted Thatcher with a silver Georgian Teapot and strainer, Haughey started to backtrack. Keen to keep Thatcher on side, and aware that the interview would probably be sent to her, he told RTÉ News that he wanted to reach out to all the people of Northern Ireland,

What I’d like to do is to invite them to discuss with us some new developments. There’s been too many failures, too many initiatives have been brought forward, too many proposals, too many conferences, all of which have ended up in the same bitter

⁷⁵ ‘Ceisleanna- questions. Oral answers- meeting with British Prime Minister,’ Dáil Éireann debate 22 Feb. 1980, vol. 318 no. 7.

⁷⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, NIO record of conversation, 25 Apr. 1980. Dublin’s record of this meeting is kept in NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/853. Brian Lenihan, Fianna Fáil. Minister for Foreign Affairs 1973, 1979-1981, 1987-1989, Minister for Defence 1989-1990, Tánaiste 1987-1990.

⁷⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/498, letter from Stowe to Sanders, 12 Aug. 1980.

⁷⁸ On 16 Feb. during his first Ard-Fheis, Haughey dedicated a section of his speech to Northern Ireland. He said that the British Government should commit to ‘... encouraging the unity of Ireland ...’ Haughey went on to call Northern Ireland a ‘failed political entity.’ pp. 327-337. On 29 May after the Teapot Summit, Haughey told the press ‘Northern Ireland is not a natural geographical or historical unit ... This aspiration for unity is a fact of history, of geography, of politics, of the deepest feelings and sentiments of the vast majority of Irishmen everywhere ... Ideally, we would like to see the British Government express an interest in the ultimate achievement of unity.’ pp. 365-366. After the Throne Room Summit, on 11 Dec. Haughey told the Dáil, ‘That is why I have been saying that the problem of Northern Ireland cannot be solved in the old framework, which has failed; why we must try to break out of it; why we must seek to raise the problem to a new plane, in which the old questions can be looked at afresh and new solutions tried.’ p. 411. Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*.

⁷⁹ *The Irish Times*, 9 Apr. 1980. Haughey’s interview was deemed important enough to send via telegram from Haydon to the FCO, as it indicated the image that Haughey was displaying to the Irish public. The interview was passed on to MT. By underlining the sentence ‘I am hopeful,’ MT indicated that Haughey’s hopes of Irish unity were nonsense. TNA UK, PREM 19/280, Haydon to FCO and NIO of 9 Apr. 1980.

frustrating failure. Now what I'd like to say to them is, can you not visualise some new beginning?⁸⁰

In August a Fianna Fáil policy review conference took place. Haughey's Joint Studies initiative was dissected. It was decided that the purpose of the studies was 'to provide a framework in which they could obtain adequate assurance that security interests would not be prejudiced by progress towards Irish unity.' An integral part of the Joint Studies would be the establishment of an Anglo-Irish Council. The Council would officialise meetings between government leaders and their ministers. It would work to 'make fundamental changes of attitude on the part of those involved.' Haughey set out what he hoped these changes would include,

- more effective security throughout Ireland ...
- action on an All-Ireland basis directed to the reconstruction of the devastated Northern Ireland economy ...
- working out an acceptable constitution for an All-Ireland political entity, and
- promoting closer relations between Ireland and Britain.⁸¹

Haughey also wanted to include the unionists in the Conference. He ordered that 'Contact should be initiated with the unionist parties of Northern Ireland and that 'ways of awakening Unionist interest in closer relations with this state should be researched.'⁸² Haughey ordered that senior unionists should be invited to any official dinners or receptions.⁸³ Basically, Haughey wanted to run with the fox and hunt with the hounds. He wanted to work closely with the people who vehemently opposed his aspirations of unity. Thatcher's team continued to try to figure out Haughey's character and aims.

London thought that Haughey's plans were tantamount to an unsustainable fantasy, 'We also had in mind that if- as may happen- the Republic wish the Taoiseach's flight of

⁸⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, transcript of interview with Taoiseach broadcast on RTÉ "News at one-thirty", 22 May 1980. Haughey's interview is not kept in the British files. This could be because MT's advisors wanted to keep her on her guard when it came to Haughey. Her advisors did not trust him, whereas MT was convinced that they were mistaken about him. This is discussed later in this chapter.

⁸¹ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1087, Northern Ireland policy review conference, Iveagh House, Dublin, 24-25 Aug. 1981.

⁸² *iBid.*,

⁸³ Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach*, p. 208.

fancy about an international initiative on Irish unity to glide slowly into something less significant, it would be in our interests to allow this to happen.’⁸⁴ *The Times* described Haughey as a ‘deeply committed republican, with political aspirations that (strayed) little from the original concepts of Fianna Fáil.’⁸⁵ Aitken describes Thatcher’s early attitude to Haughey as ‘wary,’ the arms trial casted a long shadow.⁸⁶ FitzGerald’s ‘flawed pedigree’ speech during the debates that followed Haughey’s nomination for Taoiseach, hardly aided Haughey’s image.⁸⁷ Memos from within Thatcher’s cabinet show that they were attempting to decipher the man professionally and personally. Haydon described Haughey as fostering,

A calculating and ruthless ambition ... (he) surround(s) himself with a close-knit and faithful coterie of associates whom he dominates by force of character and some of whom, it is said, he has bought ... He has become pretty sophisticated, and would like to be more so ... He is said to have been at least unscrupulous in his business dealings ... He has acquired a taste for the good things in life.⁸⁸

Memos from the NIO to Ten Downing Street (No. 10) detail Haughey’s leadership style as ‘near Presidential’ and label his Northern Ireland policy as fostering ‘a large element of sleight of hand.’⁸⁹ Yet Thatcher and Haughey were quite similar; both possessed personalities that overwhelmed people; both were resolute in their aim to bring peace to Northern Ireland (albeit for differing ultimatums); both could be flirtatious; and they were suspicious of their respective Foreign and Commonwealth Offices (FCO).⁹⁰ Northern Ireland was a ‘glittering prize.’ Unity would secure Haughey’s place in history as the great Taoiseach. The Arms Trial would be recorded as a minor blip.⁹¹ But London refused to entertain Haughey’s calls for

⁸⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/279, letter from NIO to No. 10, 25 Feb. 1980.

⁸⁵ *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1979.

⁸⁶ Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 415

⁸⁷ Garret FitzGerald, ‘Nomination of Taoiseach,’ Dáil Éireann Debate 11 Dec. 1979, vol. 317 no. 7.

⁸⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, minute from Haydon to Carrington, 9 Apr. 1980.

⁸⁹ BUFVCD, ‘Charles Haughey is new Taoiseach,’ circa. 1979. MT underlined this sentence to indicate that she agreed with it.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Cosgrove, ‘Charles Haughey’ in *Political Leaders of Contemporary Western Europe: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed., by David Wilsford (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 188, Candace Hetzner, ‘Margaret Thatcher’ in *Political Leaders of Contemporary Western Europe*, ed., by Wilsford, p. 441. *The Irish Times*, 24 Dec. 2014. MT was admired physically by some of her male counterparts. President Mitterrand said she had ‘eyes like Caligula and the mouth of Marilyn Monroe,’ while according to Moore, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia found her extremely attractive. Haughey was a well-known ladies man, his 27-year affair with columnist Terry Keane was revealed in 1999. Haughey also joked with MT about limiting the amount of staff in the Foreign Office during their first meeting in May 1980. See NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928.

⁹¹ Coogan, *The Troubles*, pp. 393-394.

unity. It needed to maintain a good working relationship with him so that cross-border security could be improved. William Whitelaw, Conservative Deputy Leader and Home Secretary, commented that Haughey ‘could not flout international opinion by blatantly withdrawing (cooperation), but only one telephone call is needed to cripple its effectiveness.’⁹² Haughey used Northern Ireland to advance his own political career, but he also used it to establish a relationship with Thatcher, and *vice versa*.⁹³

Thatcher was ‘an emotional unionist,’ and when she had said that ‘Northern Ireland was as British as Finchley she meant it.’⁹⁴ She was outraged by paramilitary atrocities, but was unsure what to do about it. Her official biographer revealed that in private Thatcher surmised that she was a unionist because ‘they (the Northern Ireland unionists) had been jolly loyal to us.’⁹⁵ But she found unionists themselves ‘up-hill work.’⁹⁶ When asked how Thatcher viewed the unionist leaders, her Press Secretary Bernard Ingham sniggered ‘well I suppose they were sent to try us, weren’t they!’⁹⁷ The Atkins talks had proved that an internal solution was not forthcoming. It was left to the Anglo-Irish political elite to move into diplomacy.⁹⁸

The Haughey-Thatcher Meetings

At the very beginning, Thatcher was cautious of meeting Haughey on her own. She noted on an FCO letter that she did not want to meet him before the EEC in April, ‘NO- the point about choosing the European council is that I will have met him in company with several others first.’⁹⁹ Thatcher usually revelled in male attention and liked to be ‘made a fuss of by

⁹² TNA UK, PREM 19/280, letter from Whitelaw to MT, 7 May 1980. William ‘Willie’ Whitelaw, Viscount Whitelaw, Conservative. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1972-1973, Chairman of the Conservative Party 1974-1975, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party 1975-1991.

⁹³ See Dwyer, *Haughey’s Forty Years*, Joyce and Murtagh, *The Boss*. Padraig O’Malley argues that calls for unification were out of step with Irish public opinion, O’Malley, *The Uncivil Wars: Ireland Today* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1983). Bruce Arnold maintains that Haughey had to alter his unity policy to maintain relations with Thatcher at the cost of his ‘green’ support base, *Haughey*, p. 171.

⁹⁴ ‘The Anglo-Irish Agreement: an interview with Sir David Goodall and Lord Armstrong of Ilminster’ in *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed., by Graham Spencer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 49.

⁹⁵ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. One*, p. 586.

⁹⁶ Douglas Hurd interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTE, 2013.

⁹⁷ Bernard Ingham interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTE, 2013. Sir Bernard Ingham, British civil servant. Press Secretary 1979-1990.

⁹⁸ Paul Arthur described how Anglo-Irish relations in the twentieth century moved through three stages; disengagement after partition, then violence which prompted a military response from Britain and concern from Dublin, then diplomacy. See Arthur, *Special Relationships: Britain, Ireland and the Northern Ireland Problem* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2000). This theory was also explored in the introduction of this thesis.

⁹⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, letter from Lever to Alexander, 18 Apr. 1980. MT heavily underlined ‘first’ to emphasize her point.

a lot of chaps.’¹⁰⁰ When they did meet, there was an element of physical attraction on Thatcher’s part. Charles Powell, Thatcher’s Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, commented that ‘there was a glint in (Haughey’s) eye that she found actually quite attractive.’¹⁰¹ Thatcher initially fell for Haughey’s charisma, ‘He set out to charm her, and I suppose at the beginning she was slightly susceptible to the charm, relations developed reasonably well.’¹⁰² Haughey projected a suave exterior, but he had thoroughly prepared for their meeting.

Representatives from the Departments of the Taoiseach, DFA and Finance were asked to have briefing papers ready for Haughey by 8 May 1980.¹⁰³ Haughey was given briefs with a nationalist colour which described Northern Ireland as a desperate idea with an unstable foundation. The brief emphasised the role Haughey had to play in convincing Thatcher that an internal solution to Northern Ireland would fail. Dublin needed to be involved. Haughey was also warned that the meeting would set the tone for future Anglo-Irish relations, and attract intense media interest.¹⁰⁴ Eamonn Kennedy, the Irish Ambassador to Britain, sent Haughey a personality report on Thatcher,¹⁰⁵

Thatcher comes across as a sharp, bossy, down-to-earth and at times abrasive Prime Minister ... She has a tidy, efficient, hard-working mind and while she impresses by her crisp grasp of detail, and her down-to-business, time-is-valuable approach she sometimes gives offence to her Cabinet by treating them as if she were an aggressive school-mistress, handing out marks to the hawks and criticising the wets. Thatcher takes great care to impress as the well-groomed, well-tailored lady who wants to be graciously treated as such but not, as it were, referred to specifically as a woman.¹⁰⁶

Kennedy warned that the death of Neave and Mountbatten had left a ‘deep psychological scar’ on Thatcher and her opinion on Ireland was thus affected. Haughey was advised that

¹⁰⁰ Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle* (London: Politico’s, 2009), p. 161. MT’s biographer Charles Moore commented that this was a bashful moment. Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. One*, p. 595.

¹⁰¹ Lord Powell interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTÉ, 2013. Charles Powell, Baron Powell of Bayswater. Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister, 1983-1991.

¹⁰² Walter Kirwan interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTÉ, 2013.

¹⁰³ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/873, meeting of officials, 8 May 1980.

¹⁰⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/873, brief on meeting with MT, 7 May 1980.

¹⁰⁵ Eamonn Kennedy, Irish Ambassador to Britain, 1978-1983. MT told Kennedy that she liked him. See chpt. 3.

¹⁰⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, personality report on MT from Kennedy, undated.

she would not immediately reject a bold new approach but he would have to bide his time.¹⁰⁷ Haughey adopted a slowly slowly approach and met with members of her team to discuss his views on Northern Ireland. During a meeting with Stowe, Haughey reiterated that any attempt to solve the Northern Ireland problem without the Irish Government would fail. Knowing that the meeting would be reported back to Thatcher, Haughey tried to flatter her. He told her team that she had ‘...the opportunity of achieving what no other Prime Minister had ever achieved ...’¹⁰⁸

Haughey’s advisors had to tread carefully. Haughey was advised to present any proposals orally, initially through Kennedy, as a paper text could look too final. This would result in an unfavourable reaction from her that would ‘colour her attitude’ to the meeting. After Kennedy had laid out the basic premise, Haughey could fill in the gaps. Although this would not provide Dublin with an immediate answer, this plan carried less risk of an outright rejection.¹⁰⁹

Memos kept in the Prime Minister’s files reveal Haughey’s personal concerns with the first meeting. He was, ‘... at pains to see that nothing is said beforehand which might sour the atmosphere.’¹¹⁰ Thatcher’s notation on a memo a few days prior to the meeting reveal her concerns about Haughey’s expectations. Haughey had indicated that he believed he could solve the Irish problem by December of that year, Thatcher noted ‘this is exactly what I feared - and he can only be disappointed.’¹¹¹ Thatcher was also advised to ‘pour cold water on some of his more far-reaching ideas, without rebuffing his desire to contribute to the resolution of the Northern Ireland problem ...’¹¹² She was given five key points to make to Haughey,

1. Guarantee: there can be no question of change ...

¹⁰⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, personality report on MT from Kennedy, undated.

¹⁰⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/853, Haughey meeting with Stowe, 15 Apr. 1980. Stowe did not meet directly with MT but was present at a meeting where she was told about Haughey’s Northern Ireland policy. See TNA UK, PREM 19/280.

¹⁰⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/873, brief on meeting with MT, 16 May 1980. There is no evidence that Kennedy was sent to meet with MT before the meeting.

¹¹⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, brief on visit of Haughey, 21 May 1980, 15 May 1980.

¹¹¹ Dwight, *Haughey’s Forty Years of Controversy*, p. 223 and TNA UK, PREM 19/280, minute from Whitmore to MT, 16 May 1980.

¹¹² TNA UK, PREM 19/280, memo from Armstrong to MT, 9 May 1980.

2. Declaration of interest by HMG in eventual Irish unity: not on ...
3. Dublin's role: recognise that they have a natural interest ...
4. Wider relationships: what does Hume mean exactly?
5. Long-term future: HMG accepts and will defend the choice of the Northern Ireland people.¹¹³

London was unsure of what Haughey would seek at the meeting, but it knew that 'he would certainly aim at extracting the maximum political advantage ...'¹¹⁴ Thatcher's main priority was security, Haughey's was to '(convince) the Prime Minister of the seriousness of Irish intentions.'¹¹⁵ Thatcher's cabinet attempted to guess what other policies Haughey would focus on,

Taoiseach aims- to establish, and be seen to establish, a relationship of trust and confidence with the Prime Minister- partly perhaps by demonstrating a robust line over terrorism. Possibly also by showing that he has constructive ideas on Ireland's role in Europe, including perhaps a readiness to question Ireland's traditional neutrality; and more generally that he is a man to be taken seriously.¹¹⁶

Thatcher was advised by Whitelaw to 'keep him sweet' to save the cross-border security initiative.¹¹⁷ Thatcher was also warned that a poor meeting would cause Anglo-Irish relations to deteriorate. Conceding a negotiating role for Haughey could be risky, but would have long-term benefits for security.¹¹⁸ Thatcher remained defiant. Beside a point that suggested an arrangement between Dublin and London, she noted 'NO.'¹¹⁹ Unaware of Thatcher's refusal to comprehend his main idea, after the Luxemburg EEC in April Haughey announced that he would meet her in London.¹²⁰

Far from welcoming the new Taoiseach, the day before Haughey arrived Thatcher told the Commons, 'the future of the constitutional affairs of Northern Ireland is a matter for

¹¹³ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, speaking note on politics, 12 May 1980.

¹¹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, No. 10 record of conversation, 12 May 1980.

¹¹⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2012/105/780, message from Seamus Mallon, 28 Jan. 1981, TNA UK, PREM 19/280, No. 10 record of conversation, 12 May 1980.

¹¹⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, visit of Haughey on 21 May 1980, steering brief by FCO, 15 May 1980.

¹¹⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, No. 10 record of conversation, 12 May 1980.

¹¹⁸ *iBid.*,

¹¹⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, letter from Armstrong to MT, 9 May 1980. MT's underline emphasizes her point.

¹²⁰ *The Irish Press* and *The Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1980, *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 Apr. 1980.

the people of Northern Ireland, the Government and this Parliament, and no one else.’¹²¹ This would have made any other world leader anxious about meeting Thatcher, but not Haughey. *The Times* described his handling of the meeting as ‘a bold performance,’ and perhaps that is what the occasion called for.¹²² A touch of Irish charm to put her at ease.

No note taker was present during the private conversation between Haughey and Thatcher, but existing records outline events from the rest of the day.¹²³ Thatcher agreed to regular meetings with Haughey to discuss Northern Ireland, but also steered the conversation to international matters including the EEC and the Middle East.¹²⁴ Thatcher was still wary of Haughey and therefore avoided discussing Northern Ireland. In her autobiography, Thatcher recounted with fondness her first impression of Haughey describing him as ‘easy to get on with ... tough, able and politically astute with few illusions.’¹²⁵ Meanwhile, Haughey raved about the meeting to the press stating that ‘new and closer cooperation’ had been agreed.¹²⁶ A memo from the NIO complemented Haughey on how prepared he was.¹²⁷ So in spite of Haughey’s inauspicious past, he impressed Thatcher and her team and ‘good rapport’ was struck.¹²⁸ Haughey also gave Thatcher a silver Georgian teapot. Haughey told Dunlop ‘She likes silver ... That will knock her back a bit.’¹²⁹

The ‘Teapot summit’ marked the beginning of a new era in Anglo-Irish relations. In the post-summit *communiqué*, the phrase “unique” was used to describe relations between the UK and Ireland. Thatcher herself suggested the word in place of “special”, which she argued was widely used to describe Anglo-American relations, ““Our relationship is unique so let’s use the word - it is stronger”.”¹³⁰ This decision would come back to haunt her.

¹²¹ ‘Prime Minister (Engagements),’ Commons sitting of 20 May 1980, Hansard HC [225-474] cc. 247-251.

¹²² *The Times*, 22 May 1980.

¹²³ It was unusual for leaders to meet without a note taker but as this was Haughey and MT’s first official meeting, both sides wanted to keep things casual. Dublin’s record of the meeting is kept in NAI, DFA 2010/20/6 and NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928. London’s record is in TNA UK, PREM 19/280.

¹²⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, Haughey meeting with MT, 21 May 1980.

¹²⁵ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 388.

¹²⁶ *The Times*, 22 May 1980.

¹²⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/280, note of a meeting held in the NIO, 30 May 1980.

¹²⁸ Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 415

¹²⁹ Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach*, p. 209.

¹³⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, notes on discussion between the Haughey and MT, 23 May 1980. MT perhaps decided to use “unique” because Britain’s “special relationship” was with the USA.

Robert Armstrong, Thatcher's Cabinet Secretary, recalled that immediately after the meeting Thatcher said that 'we had all been making a great mistake about Charles Haughey, and that he was a romantic idealist.'¹³¹ Now both sides needed to maintain their relationship as a note from the Taoiseach office indicated, 'the Taoiseach had made a very favourable impression in Britain generally as a result of the Summit. It was important to build on this climate.'¹³² Privately, the success of the meeting was echoed. In a letter to Thatcher Kennedy told her that 'we (the Irish representatives) all felt that new and encouraging vistas of co-operation in friendship had been opened between us and that the two islands were coming closer together.'¹³³ The staunchly pro-Tory *The Daily Mail* reported that a new friendship had been struck between the pair. Thatcher had also 'pledged to work with him for reconciliation over The Troubles.'¹³⁴ Back in Ireland, the papers were hungry for concrete information on the Taoiseach's first discussion with the Prime Minister.

The Cork Examiner reported that there had been 'no nettles grasped' and that Haughey had failed to gain any concessions or to initiate any of his new ideas. 'Any moves towards real and lasting solutions to the Northern problem are as far away as ever.'¹³⁵ *The Irish Independent* wanted to know what had actually happened at the meeting. They felt Haughey 'Either ... had a lot to conceal or there was nothing of substance from the meeting that could be reported.'¹³⁶ In truth aside from the teapot, there was nothing juicy for the papers to publish. Haughey and Thatcher were pleased with how the meeting went. Haughey told Haydon 'he had, "to be honest", been surprised that everything had gone so well in London ... "But," he added, "we must keep up the impetus".'¹³⁷ The day after the meeting, Thatcher called Haughey to thank him for the gift and for an enjoyable discussion.¹³⁸ The relative harmony between the two leaders did not last.

¹³¹ Lord Armstrong interviewed for 'Thatcher and the IRA: Dealing with terror,' BBC, 2014. Robert Armstrong, Baron Armstrong of Ilminster, Conservative. Secretary of the Cabinet 1979-1987. Armstrong played a pivotal role in negotiating with the Irish, especially in regards to the Armstrong-Nally talks and AIA of 1985. See chpt. 5.

¹³² NAI, TAOIS 2012/105/780, note from Boys-Smith, 21 Jan. 1981.

¹³³ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, letter from Kennedy to MT, 22 May 1980. A week after the meeting Kennedy sent MT a bunch of orchids, a flower symbolizing love and strength. CAC, THCR 3/2/27.

¹³⁴ *The Daily Mail*, 22 May 1980.

¹³⁵ *The Cork Examiner*, 22 May 1980. *The Cork Examiner* is an edition of *The Irish Examiner*.

¹³⁶ *The Evening Herald*, 22 May 1980.

¹³⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, FCO 19 of 27 May 1980.

¹³⁸ CAC, THCR 3/1/8ii, No. 10 record of telephone conversation, 22 May 1980.

In June 1980, Haughey was given the opportunity to present himself to the British public via an interview on the BBC current affairs programme, *Panorama*. This was the first time the new Taoiseach had the opportunity to speak on his own terms. It was a chance to reaffirm the relationship he was building with Thatcher, and to set the record straight regarding his past. Whether the programme was heavily edited or Haughey forgot himself in the heat of the moment, we may never know. Haughey placed the blame on the BBC for omitting several key discussions and projecting him in a negative light.¹³⁹ Either way, during the interview Haughey said that in order for Ireland to successfully work alongside Britain, it would be necessary for Britain to withdraw completely from Northern Ireland.¹⁴⁰ This was nothing new. As previously discussed he had told the Irish electorate and his party the same thing. Haughey's call for unity after meeting with Thatcher was ill timed.

Following the broadcast, Haughey had some groveling to do in London. He was aware of the damage his interview had caused, 'the Irish Ambassador rang the Department this afternoon to say that the Taoiseach had just telephoned him to say that he was disturbed by reports that his *Panorama* interview had occasioned some dissatisfaction in London.'¹⁴¹ Although there is little evidence of Thatcher's personal reaction to the *Panorama* interview, her team reminded her of the possible benefits of Anglo-Irish relations,

... if the present political initiative in Northern Ireland shows any signs of success, it could only be helpful if it is reinforced by regular meetings between the Prime Minister and Mr. Haughey. If on the other hand the political initiative looks like its losing its momentum, a regular series of meetings with Mr. Haughey will provide something on which to fall back on.¹⁴²

A letter from NIO highlighted the fragility of relations at this early stage. The memo includes several hand-written comments by Thatcher revealing her dismay at Haughey's misunderstanding of their recent discussion at the EEC at Venice in June. Haughey told John Hume, SDLP leader, that Thatcher had said she 'did not expect the Governments initiative

¹³⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/281, letter from FCO to No. 10, 11 June 1980.

¹⁴⁰ *The Irish Times*, 10 June 1980.

¹⁴¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/281, letter from FCO to NO. 10, 11 June 1980.

¹⁴² TNA UK, PREM 19/507, letter from Robert Armstrong to Mr. Pattinson, 11 June 1980.

to get anywhere.’ She placed three exclamation points beside this sentence, further expressing her irritation in a note, ‘I am sure I said no such thing. I told him the white paper would be out within a few weeks and then we would have to discuss it.’ Thatcher also penned a lengthy analysis of the situation, saying that she did say she would ‘spend some time on going over the history of the Irish problem to see how we could best go ahead and to get a better feel for the nature of the problem.’¹⁴³ Thatcher also highlighted Haughey’s expectations, ‘in his heart of hearts (he is) expecting far more than we are and (he) is looking forward to the next bilateral as if it will result in positive and considerable steps forward to a very much closer relationship ... I see he will be disappointed - very disappointed.’¹⁴⁴ Meanwhile, officials from Dublin and London met to make arrangements for future Thatcher-Haughey meetings.

Hugh Swift of the Irish Embassy met with David Chesterton, a British Official, to exchange views on a December summit. Chesterton remarked that although the Atkins talks had failed, it had been a useful exercise. ‘... no real dialogue had developed between the political parties but, conversely, they were extremely pleased at the improved understanding between individual political parties and the Government as regards their respective positions.’ Chesterton also pointed out that the government’s position was a precarious one. Supporters had to be kept happy in order for Thatcher to stay in power, and many backbenchers were staunch traditional unionists. Chesterton assured Swift that the NIO would continue working “to keep the ball in the air” in Northern Ireland.¹⁴⁵ After some back and forth suggestions with Dublin, 8 December was set as the next summit.¹⁴⁶

Haughey sent Lenihan to meet with Atkins in October to prepare for the upcoming December meeting. Lenihan recognised the efforts London had made to bring the northern parties together, but again emphasized the need to include Dublin in future. Lenihan told Atkins, ‘... it would be wrong to divorce the two Northern Ireland communities from the rest

¹⁴³ MT did request a reading list to consult during her summer holiday. The list included F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* and Lord Longford, *Peace by Ordeal*. See TNA UK, PREM 19/281 and TNA UK, PREM 19/279.

¹⁴⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, letter from Harrington to Alexander, 30 July 1980. Harrington subsequently suggested that MT’s note should be given a ‘very restricted circulation.’ See TNA UK, PREM 19/281. MT underlined each of these words to emphasize her point.

¹⁴⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, conversation with David Chesterton on 2 Oct. 1980.

¹⁴⁶ See TNA UK, PREM 19/507.

of Ireland.’¹⁴⁷ Lenihan argued that by including Dublin, the minority community would feel they were represented in any new deal and would be more likely to accept it. Dublin was pushing an open door. British Ministers had realised that an Irish dimension was necessary.¹⁴⁸ It was Thatcher they needed to convince. She was pleased with Haughey’s efforts on security, indeed Atkins pointed out that ‘it had not gone unnoticed that the Irish Government was devoting more and more of its resources to border security. London was well aware of what Dublin was doing ...’ However, more could be done. The feeling on the ground in Northern Ireland was that terrorists could still cross the border. Atkins reported that ‘Twice recently, in his contacts with ‘ordinary people,’ he was left in no doubt that ‘things were boiling up beneath the surface.’ He had been told of the possibility that ‘a whole lot of Protestants would murder a whole lot of Catholics.’¹⁴⁹

Reports on the atmosphere in Northern Ireland were requested for Haughey’s consideration. These briefings provided the background to current thinking in Northern Ireland, allowing the reader to form a line of argument during official meetings. However, Stowe warned Andrew O’Rourke, Secretary of the DFA, that information requests were sometimes misunderstood.¹⁵⁰ ‘If one asks for information about a particular idea ... this does not mean that one is either in favour of, or hostile to the idea or that one is asking for it to be promoted. It is a question of knowing how minds are working.’ Stowe warned that Hume was privy to Irish information requests and was passing on his own assumptions of what they meant to the NIO. With this information, the Irish could tacitly request briefings. Thatcher, through the NIO, would potentially be made aware of a similar line of thought in Dublin. This would instil confidence in Haughey and the Anglo-Irish process. O’Rourke asked Stowe if Thatcher was still interested in Northern Ireland. Stowe assured him that Thatcher was still determined to find a solution. Her team was involved in a process which was at stage four or five. Stage six would be a decision on how to move forward. ‘It was important to “get things right”.’ Stowe continued, ‘For Thatcher ... there is a real interest in reaching a solution, the time scale being about 3 years ... for the Irish Government the time scale is shorter.’¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, meeting between Lenihan and Atkins, 13 Oct. 1980.

¹⁴⁸ See TNA UK, PREM 19/498 and TNA UK, PREM 19/507.

¹⁴⁹ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, meeting between Lenihan and Atkins, 13 Oct. 1980.

¹⁵⁰ Andrew O’Rourke, Irish diplomat. Secretary of the DFA 1978-1981, Irish Ambassador to Britain, 1987-1991.

¹⁵¹ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, memo from O’Rourke, 14 Oct. 1980.

In November 1980, Robert Armstrong briefed her on Haughey's outlook. Armstrong felt that Haughey 'would like to be the Taoiseach who unlocked the door to the solution to the Northern Ireland problem.' His calls for unity were a way of testing Thatcher's 'vulnerable' and 'sticking' points. Haughey's minor concessions were intended to place him in a good place with his supporters, then 'he (would) be in a position with his own electorate to blame us for failure.'¹⁵² Tory grandee and Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, also wrote to Thatcher to offer his advice.¹⁵³ He warned that a 'final solution' was not possible 'within our lifetime.' He said that Northern Ireland was made up of 'two, mutually hostile, tribes' and that there was 'no such thing as the Irish people.' Hailsham concluded that Thatcher's task was to 'find a means within our span of life in office in which effect is given to the requirements ...'¹⁵⁴ Before the December summit, Thatcher and Haughey entered into their final preparations.

During one of the last meetings before the summit, Haughey briefed his delegation on how they should proceed.¹⁵⁵ He wanted it to be made clear to London that Dublin was displeased with the border. He recalled that a 'Member of the government travelling to Donegal recently through the six counties had noticed that there was no military or police presence immediately north of the border. The British would have to do better than that and they should be told so.'¹⁵⁶ This was contrary to how London viewed the situation. In October, the Department of the Taoiseach reported that London was so pleased with current security that it wanted to move away from discussing it, and instead focus on criminal law reform.¹⁵⁷ Haughey also wanted to push the inter-Governmental conference. When asked what kind of

¹⁵² TNA UK, PREM 19/498, memo from Armstrong to MT, 14 Nov. 1980.

¹⁵³ Lord Hailsham, Lord Chancellor 1979-1987. According to a briefing from the DFA, Hailsham was '... very lively and agreeable; interested in, and knowledgeable about Ireland; and sure that his family background, moderate unionist leanings, and the fact that he first visited the area as far back as 1928 all give him a "feel" for the problem which his colleagues in Cabinet do not, and cannot, have. (His father, the first Viscount Hailsham was Lord Chancellor in his time. As you perhaps know, he was the only one in the Cabinet Committee who held out against handing back the ports in 1938; and in March 1938, he wrote to Chamberlain to oppose certain points in the then Anglo-Irish negotiations saying "Ulster loyalty is not for sale!")'. DFA 2017/20/17.

¹⁵⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/498, letter from Lord Hailsham to Atkins, 17 Nov. 1980.

¹⁵⁵ For the formal December meeting that was in Dublin, Haughey was able to select a more extensive team. Andrew O'Rourke, Secretary at the DFA, Michael O'Kennedy, Minister for Finance, J. Power, Secretary at the Department of Fisheries, M. Burke, who was note taker, and Messrs. M. Horgan, Neligan, Kirwan, P. MacKernan, and. T. O'Sullivan.

¹⁵⁶ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, main points emerging from meeting of 4 Nov., 5 Nov. 1980.

¹⁵⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, meeting between the Minister and British Ministers in London, Oct. 1980.

conference they should present, Haughey told his team ‘we should tell the British that we wanted a constitutional conference but we did not care how they might decide to dress it up.’ Haughey still wanted to ‘sell the case for Irish unity to Thatcher, to the British Government and to the great British public ... we were attempting to help to find a solution and that we wished to take Northern Ireland off the backs of the British.’ Haughey felt that Thatcher would probably refuse to discuss unity, ‘mentioning as objections ... her own unionism (“I was not elected to preside over the dismemberment of the United Kingdom”) and her Government’s fear of a loyalist backlash.’¹⁵⁸

At a meeting between Thatcher and Haughey’s Ministers, London responded strongly to Haughey’s ideas.¹⁵⁹ In regards the conference, the Dublin papers reported that London’s reaction was ‘personal ... and not receptive.’ Thatcher would have to be sold on this idea.¹⁶⁰ London said that it had not been told ‘from on high’ what to discuss. This is contrary to what Stowe had reported earlier. If Thatcher was taking a keen interest in Northern Ireland surely she would have wanted to brief her delegation before their meeting? Dublin assured them that this was an exploratory. Thatcher’s team took the opportunity to discuss the language used by Dublin. They warned that phrases including the “totality of relationships within Ireland” and “these islands” were unacceptable, as they sailed too close to unity.¹⁶¹ The meeting concluded when Stowe assured Haughey’s team that Thatcher ‘would come to the meeting informed and purposely applied to the problem of Northern Ireland.’¹⁶²

In the midst of this a challenge to both London and Dublin emerged. When London ended special category status in March 1976 for convicted republican prisoners in the Maze

¹⁵⁸ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, main points emerging from meeting of 4 Nov., 5 Nov. 1980.

¹⁵⁹ Present from London was Kenneth Stowe, Secretary in the NIO, Michael Moriarty, Deputy Secretary, NIO, Ambassador Figg, Ewart Bell, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Ken Bloomfield, Secretary in the Department of the Environment, Jack Hermon, Chief Constable of the RUC, Brook Richards, Security Coordinator, Norman Dugdale, Secretary in the Department of Health and Welfare, Brian Palmer from the Central Secretariat and Wyatt, Belloc and Burns from the NIO. The Dublin team comprised Andrew O’Rourke, Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, David Neligan, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Walter Kirwan, Assistant Secretary in Department of the Taoiseach, and Dermot Nally, Secretary to the Government. It is important to note that the Irish government would always refer to officials collectively as ‘the British’ even though it was made up of people from the NIO and the RUC etc. An official summary will not attribute quotations or ideas to individuals. There is no record of this meeting in the London or Northern Ireland files. This meeting is briefly referred to in TNA UK, PREM 19/339.

¹⁶⁰ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, discussion at British Embassy on 5 Nov. 1980.

¹⁶¹ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, conversation in London, 26 Nov. 1980.

¹⁶² NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, talks at Stormont, 17-21 Nov. 1980.

prison a chain of protests began. The protests escalated from a blanket protest, which began with PIRA prisoner, Kieran Nugent in September 1976, to a Hunger Strike, the first in March 1980, followed by a second in January 1981.¹⁶³ Thatcher was determined not to yield to the prisoners, and so a stalemate ensued. Haughey and the Irish Government were ever anxious to make a political breakthrough in Northern Ireland but it was considered bad timing for an Anglo-Irish summit, ‘a generally unfavourable atmosphere’ was apparent. With all the arrangements made, it was decided to go ahead.¹⁶⁴

London and Dublin’s records of the meeting vary. Dublin’s record focuses overly on Haughey’s joint studies, whereas the London papers detail a long discussion about the Hunger Strikes. This is indicative of each sides priority going in to the meeting. Haughey needed to get tangible results from Thatcher, and Thatcher wanted to steer the conversation away from Haughey’s joint studies idea.¹⁶⁵ Dublin’s papers also reflect their frustration with being left to run after London. Another interesting aspect of the record points to Thatcher’s relationship with Lynch and whether the exchanges between them ‘affected the attitude of the British Prime Minister to the studies process.’¹⁶⁶ In spite of these problems, Haughey’s team felt that the two sides worked well together, ‘the discussions were regarded by both sides as extremely constructive and significant.’¹⁶⁷ Haughey was also flattered by the high-profile British delegation.¹⁶⁸ In spite of Thatcher’s attempts to steer the conversation away from Haughey’s idea, he pushed his idea for an Anglo-Irish Conference forward. Thatcher told him that ‘it was a bit soon to talk of a conference,’ and changed the subject to cross-border security. She felt it was important to work on more ‘practical’ issues including gas supplies and tourism before they could move on to the bigger issues. Haughey argued that the small problems would continue to grow due to nationalist resistance. Government to Government contacts were crucial. Haughey’s perserverance appeared to work, Thatcher replied that ‘she would like to try to give the studies a practical format. She added “I think

¹⁶³ The Hunger Strikes will be discussed in chpt. 3.

¹⁶⁴ Dwight, *Haughey’s Forty Years of Controversy*, p. 220, NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, effects of H-Block Hunger Strike on Anglo-Irish relations and on forthcoming meeting, undated. See also TNA UK PREM 19/339.

¹⁶⁵ Dublin’s version can be found in NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, TAOIS 2010/53/930, TAOIS 2010/53/934, TAOIS 2010/53/976 and TAOIS 2014/105/780. London’s version of the meeting can be found in TNA UK, PREM 19/507.

¹⁶⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/780, summary of joint studies, 8 Dec. 1980.

¹⁶⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/780, *communiqué*, 8 Dec. 1980.

¹⁶⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/934, Haughey meeting with and MT in Dublin Castle, 8 Dec. 1980.

we need to look at joint studies” and appeared to agree with the Taoiseach’s proposition.¹⁶⁹ Thatcher then returned to security.

Border areas were difficult to patrol.¹⁷⁰ As well as suspects crossing the border, as they had after the Warrenpoint Ambush, it was evident that border residents were uncomfortable with the Army presence there. Deaths in the area were actually increasing.¹⁷¹ In spite of this, Thatcher was pleased with the work between the RUC and Garda. Haughey, in an argument that would be echoed throughout Thatcher’s premiership, explained that although security was important, ‘it was not the whole picture.’ The two leaders clashed over the origin of the violence, ‘We are concerned with the spill-over effects of Northern violence (in Ireland). The Prime Minister said that she thought that much of the violence came from (Ireland). Haughey explained that many of the perpetrators of violence had been ‘locked up,’ so the next task would be to isolate their comrades in Northern Ireland. This, Haughey argued, could only be done if a new political initiative were launched,

If we could get these studies going we might be able to move forward, on a basis which would enable the people in Northern Ireland to live at peace with one another on the understanding that the two Governments are co-operating. What was involved was a great historic move. If the situation was handled right the two Governments could, perhaps, between them solve the problem. They knew the British had certain concerns with Defence. We would fully accept these in any new arrangements. He would like them to be assured that Ireland would never be used as a base for an attack on Britain.¹⁷²

Thatcher partially agreed with Haughey. She wanted to end the violence but emphasized again that she could not agitate the unionists by involving Dublin in the solution. They would need to be persuaded and this was a job for London. Haughey asked Thatcher to take more

¹⁶⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/930, Haughey meeting with MT in Dublin Castle, 8 Dec. 1980.

¹⁷⁰ See Henry Patterson, *Ireland’s Violent Frontier: The Border and Anglo-Irish Relations During the Troubles* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013) for an in-depth look at security problems around the border and its effect on the Thatcher-Haughey dynamic.

¹⁷¹ In June 1980, there had been 54 unsolved murders in South Fermanagh alone. The PIRA were selecting “soft” targets from local protestant families, highlighting security failings on the part of the Army. See TNA UK, PREM 19/502.

¹⁷² NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/930, meeting between Haughey and MT in Dublin Castle, 8 Dec. 1980.

personal interest in this and cross-border studies.¹⁷³ Thatcher again fell back on security before the meeting concluded.

Post meeting, Haughey was jubilant. One memo, passed between the recently-appointed British Ambassador to Ireland, Leonard Figg and Alexander, gives a glimpse of the triumphant mood Haughey was in,

You may remember just before lunch yesterday that when Mr. Haughey was showing the Prime Minister the throne in the main central Throne Room he invited her to sit on it. She firmly disclaimed any intention of doing so but suggested he should do so if he wished. They both laughed and went off to lunch ... Haughey returned to the Throne Room, where a lot of his officials were still milling around and drinking. He then ascended the throne and sat on it, his feet not quite touching the floor, and told the company they should now all kneel. He has a good sense of fun, and we might as well take comfort from the fact that he clearly thought the day had gone well.¹⁷⁴

Progress had been made. A note sent from Thatcher to Haughey discussed how they had ‘carried the development of relations ... a stage further.’¹⁷⁵ The meeting also saw the first use of the phrase ‘totality of relationships.’ If a relationship between Dublin and London was developed, the tense situation in Northern Ireland could be neutralised. The meeting caused a media frenzy, the result of which would see a harsh lesson in phraseology for both Haughey and Thatcher.

The general response to the Dublin summit was that of confusion; mystery surrounded what had been discussed, and if anything had been agreed. Haughey told the post-summit press conference that ‘sufficient for the day is the achievement thereof’ and alluded to ‘... historic progress.’¹⁷⁶ The Irish press reported that Haughey was deluded, ‘the search for the true significance of this week’s Anglo-Irish summit continues but the Taoiseach ... remains convinced that it ... would raise the Northern problem to a new plane.’¹⁷⁷ In the Dáil,

¹⁷³ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/930, meeting between Haughey and MT in Dublin Castle, 8 Dec. 1980.

¹⁷⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/507, UK Ambassador letter to Alexander, 8 Dec. 1980.

¹⁷⁵ CAC, THCR 3/1/11, letter from MT to Haughey, 11 Dec. 1980.

¹⁷⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/934, transcript of the Taoiseach’s press conference following meeting with MT, 8 Dec. 1980.

¹⁷⁷ *The Irish Times*, 12 Dec. 1980. See also *The Evening Herald*, 8 and 9 Dec. 1980, *The Irish Examiner*, 9 Dec. 1980, *The Irish Press*, 11 Dec. 1980, *The Cork Examiner*, 9 Dec. 1980.

Haughey was asked to clarify what had happened and how significant the meeting had been. Patrick Harte, a Fine Gael TD, mocked Haughey.¹⁷⁸ He asked him to ‘tell us what extraordinary thing happened at this meeting that did not happen before.’ FitzGerald went on to sarcastically thank Haughey for ‘(clarifying) what I think to be obscure.’¹⁷⁹ Results were expected, but not forthcoming. Haughey’s use of the phrase ‘historic progress,’ was problematic.

What did ‘historic progress’ mean? Reporters poured over the post-summit *communiqué* to try to understand what Haughey meant. They failed to reach a conclusion, ‘From the *communiqué* issued and from the Taoiseach’s comments afterwards nothing was revealed that justifies the description “historic” being applied to the meeting. (Even Thatcher was enigmatic at her press conference).’¹⁸⁰ Contrasts were made between Haughey’s press conference and Thatcher’s ‘lukewarm’ reception, ‘Thatcher seemed to attach less weight to some of the proposals than did Mr. Haughey. Observers found it difficult to assess just how much progress has been made on the Northern problem.’¹⁸¹ There were calls for her to ‘come clean’ on the summit.¹⁸² *The Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian* praised Thatcher for breaking ‘through 59 years of prejudice and hate yesterday to put the issue of closer links between Belfast and Dublin back on the political agenda.’¹⁸³ *The Observer*, was less than complimentary. It accused Thatcher of performing a ‘u-turn’ on Northern Ireland.¹⁸⁴ Other titles attempted to reassure the unionists that there was nothing to fear of this new venture.¹⁸⁵ *The Belfast Telegraph* focused on unionist unease.¹⁸⁶ Powell fanned the flames within unionist circles. He described the summit as a ‘mini-Munich,’ a ‘visible humiliation of the Government ...’¹⁸⁷ At a private lunch with Gow, Powell attacked the terminology used in the *communiqué*. ‘He sees the use of words like “institutional structures” as the beginning of a

¹⁷⁸ Patrick ‘Paddy’ Harte, Fine Gael TD 1961-1997.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Meeting of Taoiseach and British Prime Minister: Motion,’ Dáil Éireann Debate, 11 Dec. 1980, vol. 323 no. 8.

¹⁸⁰ *The Evening Herald*, 9 Dec. 1980. See also *The Guardian*, 8 Dec. 1980, *The Evening Herald*, 12 Dec. 1980, *The Irish Press*, 9 Dec. 1980, *The News Letter*, 12 Dec. 1980, *The Observer*, 14 Dec. 1980.

¹⁸¹ *The Cork Examiner*, 9 Dec. 1980.

¹⁸² *The News Letter*, 13 Dec. 1980, *The Sunday Times*, 14 Dec. 1980.

¹⁸³ *The Daily Mail*, 9 Dec. 1980, *The Guardian*, 9 Dec. 1980.

¹⁸⁴ *The Observer*, 14 Dec. 1980.

¹⁸⁵ *The Daily Mirror*, 9 Dec. 1980, *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 Dec. 1980, *The Times*, 11 Dec. 1980.

¹⁸⁶ *The Belfast Telegraph*, 10 Dec. 1980 and 3. Feb. 1981.

¹⁸⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/507, text of Powell interview, ‘World at One,’ BBC, 10 Dec. 1980.

softening-up of British opinion on the way to disposing of the “problem” of Northern Ireland ...¹⁸⁸

The meeting continued to dominate headlines for weeks after.¹⁸⁹ Thatcher tried to downplay Haughey’s over-zealous press conference. She stressed that talks would focus on “institutional - but not “constitutional” - structures ...’¹⁹⁰ This was the first blip in the Thatcher-Haughey relationship, and it was not the last. In 1981, relations crumbled due to a series of interviews given by Lenihan.

Lenihan was well known in Government circles as a ‘delightfully indiscreet’ character. ‘He found it too difficult to lie, and when confronted about some misdemeanor or other would disarmingly admit to whatever mistake had been made.’¹⁹¹ In essence, he was a journalist’s dream interview. During an interview with Geraldine Kennedy, a well-respected Irish political journalist, Lenihan claimed that the burgeoning relationship between Britain and Ireland meant that a united Ireland was possible within ten years.¹⁹² The Lenihan interview left Thatcher ‘very, very distressed.’ His tone was ‘wholly different from everything which we agreed in our previous *communiqué*.’¹⁹³ Thatcher and Haughey were due to meet on the margins of the EEC at Maastricht, and Thatcher took the opportunity to have a private audience with Haughey. Although no official record of that conversation exists, contemporary accounts tell us that Thatcher hand-bagged Haughey,

Thatcher tore into Haughey who remained silent effectively ... for about half an hour ... you could say that the bilateral relationship that he (Haughey) had been carefully building up ... that was the point at which it was shattered.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ CAC, THCR 2/1/4/106, note from Gow to Stanbrook, 16 Dec. 1980.

¹⁸⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/930, memo from O Ceallaigh to Walshe, 22 Dec. 1980.

¹⁹⁰ *The News Letter*, 11 and 13 Dec. 1980. See also TNA UK, PREM 19/507.

¹⁹¹ Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach*, p. 81.

¹⁹² TNA UK, PREM 19/508, telegram 76 from Figg to FCO of 23 Mar. 1981. Lenihan also gave an interview to the BBC World Service along similar lines on the same day. See NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1021 and Tim Pat Coogan, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 542. Geraldine Kennedy, Irish journalist for *The Munster Express*, *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Press*. Progressive Democrat TD 1987-1989. Kennedy successfully sued Haughey for illegally tapping her phone. See chpt. 3.

¹⁹³ BUFVCD, remark by MT, ‘EEC Summit in Netherlands,’ 24 Mar. 1981.

¹⁹⁴ Dr. Martin Mansergh interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTÉ, 2013.

The media reports from the EEC pick up on this tension and reflect a similar description of Thatcher's conversation with Haughey, 'Brian Lenihan certainly looked a most unhappy [*sic*] man in Maastricht. There he was walking Charlie into three or four minutes of the shortest side of Thatcher's tongue, and then having to take all the blame for it.'¹⁹⁵ James Prior, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, later recalled that 'she wanted to throw the teapot away.'¹⁹⁶ Haughey and Thatcher agreed that they needed to '... pull things back.' Haughey felt the best thing to do was to sleep on it and Thatcher agreed. 'The two heads of government parted with expressions of mutual esteem and regret!'¹⁹⁷ This was the last Anglo-Irish summit of Haughey's first term.

Conclusion

In June, FitzGerald replaced Haughey as Taoiseach. It had been a challenging term in office for Haughey; a climactic return to the Dáil front bench and blossoming Anglo-Irish relations had been hampered by the Hunger Strikes. This chapter has shown how delicate Anglo-Irish relations were at the beginning of the 1980s. Thatcher was initially charmed by Haughey, and to a certain extent did not believe the personality reports that were presented to her. Haughey, on the other hand, seemed to know exactly how to treat Thatcher. He used his humour to disarm her and his own team admired him for this. However, as the rest of this thesis will continue to prove, Anglo-Irish relations during the 1980s were almost constantly on a knife's edge. The two high profile Anglo-Irish summit meetings had gone reasonably well, but were let down by Haughey's overzealous presentations to the media and Thatcher's refusal to seriously consider his ideas. The press interest in the Anglo-Irish summit meetings added an extra level of stress for both teams. Lenihan's interview proved to be the final straw for Thatcher. By the time Haughey left office, Anglo-Irish relations were in tatters. Thatcher had realised that Lynch 'utterly and totally useless, as wet as a whistle,' but her

¹⁹⁵ *The Irish Times*, 28 Mar. 1981.

¹⁹⁶ Lord Prior interviewed for 'Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,' RTÉ, 2013. Lord James 'Jim' Prior, Baron Prior, Conservative. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1981-1984. Many believed Thatcher moved Prior to the 'dustbin' of Northern Ireland to get him away from central Cabinet. Prior was widely regarded as leader of the 'wets.' Thatcher had beaten Prior to leadership of the party in 1975.

¹⁹⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/508, No. 10 record of conversation, 24 Mar. 1981. There is no record of this meeting in the Dublin files.

disappointment in Haughey was to damage Anglo-Irish relations beyond his first term.¹⁹⁸
Dublin was ‘the enemy.’¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Sir Bernard Ingham interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTÉ, 2013.

¹⁹⁹ Lord Powell interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTÉ, 2013.

Chapter 2

Crisis in Ireland: The Hunger Strikes, 1980-1981

There is no question of granting political status.¹

Patrick Dillon had been an Officer at Magilligan Prison in County Londonderry for less than a year. He had a wife and five children and was hoping to purchase a new home. Dillon was about to get into his car just after lunchtime on 8 April 1976 when a van pulled up. Dillon was shot four times at close range before the assassins sped off.² The PIRA later admitted responsibility for Dillon's death. He was the first prison officer to be killed during The Troubles.³ Dillon was targeted because Merlyn Rees had announced that special category status would be phased out from the Northern Ireland prison system.⁴ From 1972, convicted paramilitary prisoners were treated the same as prisoners of war. They were excused from work, allowed to wear their own clothes, permitted one parcel per week, could send one letter per week (the cost of which would be covered by the Government) and one thirty-minute visit per week.⁵ Without special category status, the PIRA and INLA lost these privileges and the recognition that their crimes were politically motivated.⁶

This chapter will focus primarily on the secretive negotiations between Dublin and London during the 1980 and 1981 Hunger Strikes. When Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, prisoners in the Maze had been protesting against the removal of special category status for three years. The first section of this chapter will begin with a brief examination of the protests in the Maze prison from 1976-1980. The protests had escalated from a blanket protest, initiated by Kieran Nugent in 1976 when he refused to wear a prison uniform, to a dirty protest, started after a prisoner was taken to solitary confinement after a

¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, MT press conference at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 21 Apr. 1981.

² *The Ulster Herald*, 17 Apr. 1976.

³ 13 prison officers were killed during The Troubles. See David McKittrick, *Lost Lives: The Stories of the Men, Women and Children Who Died as a Result of the Northern Ireland Troubles* (London: Random House, 2001).

⁴ 'Northern Ireland,' Commons sitting of 26 Mar. 1976, Hansard HC [603-776] cc. 641-676.

⁵ Thomas Hennessey, *Hunger Strike: Thatcher's Battle with the IRA, 1980-81* (Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2014), p. 20.

⁶ It was paramount for paramilitary crimes to be categorized as politically motivated so that suspects could not be extradited by the British Government from the Republic of Ireland. See chpt. 7 for more on extradition.

fight with a prison officer in 1978.⁷ The Thatcher Government announced in March 1980 that special category status had ended for good. In retaliation, seven prisoners began a Hunger Strike on 27 October. The second part of this chapter will look at the effects of the 1980 Hunger Strikes on Anglo-Irish relations. The protestors made five demands; the right to wear their own clothing; the right not to do prison work; the right of free association with other prisoners; the right to one visit, one letter and one parcel per week; and the restoration of remission.⁸ The 1980 Hunger Strike ended when an offer from London was accepted by Brendan Hughes, the PIRA Operational Command in the prison, who wanted to save his friend and fellow striker, Sean McKenna, from death.⁹ Civilian-style clothing and free association were offered but the other three demands were not met. Political status would not be granted, and the prisoners felt they had been tricked.¹⁰ Frustration grew in the Maze and rumours of another Hunger Strike reached Thatcher in January.¹¹ More trouble was on the horizon.

The final section of this chapter will examine the second Hunger Strike from March to October 1981. Although much has been written on the 1981 Hunger Strike, a close examination of its impact on Anglo-Irish relations, particularly during Garret FitzGerald's first term, has not yet been undertaken. The second strike, led by Robert Sands, started on 1 March 1981.¹² This Hunger Strike was organised to gain maximum publicity. Protestors staggered the start of their Hunger Strike so that when one man died, another would take his place. A Westminster by-election in Fermanagh-South Tyrone, and the 1981 Irish General

⁷ Pdraig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), pp. 20-22.

⁸ O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, p. 3. For more on the protests in the Maze prison see David Beresford, *Ten Men Dead: The Story of the 1981 Hunger Strike* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997), Tom Collins, *The Irish Hunger Strike* (Dublin: White Island, 1986), Francis Stuart Ross, *Smashing H-Block: The Rise and Fall of the Popular Campaign Against Criminalization, 1976-1982* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), R.K. Walker, *The Hunger Strikes* (Belfast: Lagan Books, 2006).

⁹ Brendan Hughes, PIRA Commander and leader of the 1980 Hunger Strike. Hughes opposed the second Strike of 1981. Sean McKenna, PIRA Volunteer and participant in 1980 Hunger Strike.

¹⁰ See works by Richard O'Rawe for more on the offers made to PIRA prisoners in the Maze, O'Rawe, *Afterlives: The Hunger Strike and the Offer That Changed Irish History* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2010) and *Blanketmen: An Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike* (Dublin: New Island, 2005).

¹¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, letter from Hopkins to Alexander, 9 Jan. 1981.

¹² For accounts of the strikes by the strikers see *Hunger Strike, Reflections on the 1981 Hunger Strike*, ed., by Danny Morrison (London and Kerry: Brandon, 2006), Collins, *The Irish Hunger Strike*, Brian Campbell, Laurence McKeown and Felim O'Hagan (eds.), *Nor Meekly Serve My Time, The H-Block Struggle 1976-1981* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2006), Bobby Sands, *The Diary of Bobby Sands* (Dublin: Sinn Féin, 1981). Robert 'Bobby' Sands, Anti-H-Block MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, 1981. PIRA Volunteer and leader of the second Hunger Strike of 1981. Died after 66 days on Hunger Strike.

Election provided the strikers with another opportunity for publicity. Sands won the by-election while Paddy Agnew and Kieran Doherty won seats in Dáil Éireann.¹³ Haughey had failed to persuade Thatcher to grant all demands bar political status.¹⁴ His relations with Thatcher were fragile due to the 1980 *communiqué* (see chapter one) and he struggled to balance Anglo-Irish relations with his sympathy for the protestors.¹⁵ In the 1981 Dáil elections, Agnew and Doherty Dáil won their seats from Fianna Fáil and Haughey lost his majority. His first term as Taoiseach was over.

When FitzGerald became Taoiseach in June 1981 he inherited a Government in crisis. The death of Sands in May and Doherty in August brought world-wide attention to the anti-H-Block campaign. FitzGerald feared that political support for the prisoners would wreak havoc in Ireland.¹⁶ He prioritised the Hunger Strike on entering office but also sought to improve Anglo-Irish relations. His announcement of his ‘constitutional crusade,’ an attempt to remove certain theocratic laws and articles from the Irish constitution, appealed to Thatcher, but the Hunger Strike remained the central issue.¹⁷ FitzGerald sought the help of the International Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP) while London secretly negotiated with the PIRA.¹⁸ London’s negotiations with the PIRA annoyed FitzGerald, but when he met Thatcher in November, the two agreed to establish the Anglo-Irish Inter-Governmental Council (AIIGC). The AIIGC would act as an official body for talks between Belfast, Dublin and London.¹⁹ Thatcher maintained that the Hunger Strike would only end if the PIRA Command ordered it. In the end, the families intervened starting with Paddy Quinn on 31 July, Patrick McGeown on 20 August and Matt Devlin and Lawrence McKeown on 4

¹³ Northern Ireland Elections, Fermanagh and South Tyrone 1973-1982, <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/cfst.htm>, Brian Farrell, ‘The context of three elections,’ *Ireland at the Polls, 1981, 1982 and 1987*, ed., by Howard R. Penniman and Brian Farrell (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 7. Paddy Agnew, Anti-H-Block TD 1981-1982, PIRA Volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Kieran Doherty, Anti-H-Block TD 1981, PIRA Volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Doherty died after 73 days on Hunger Strike.

¹⁴ Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity* for an account of Haughey’s role in the Hunger Strikes. Hennessey examined MT and the Hunger Strikes in *Hunger Strike: Thatcher’s Battle with the IRA, 1980-81*.

¹⁵ Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach*, p. 231.

¹⁶ THCR 3/1/15, FitzGerald letter to MT, 10 July 1981. FitzGerald penned a biography, *All in a Life*, but as of yet there is no dedicated analysis of his role in the Hunger Strikes.

¹⁷ *The Irish Times*, 27 Dec. 2014, David Hill, ‘The Constitutional Issue in Irish politics,’ in *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed., by Spencer, p. 62.

¹⁸ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1824, notes taken during meeting between Alison and ICJP, undated (could be 3 or 4 July). TNA UK, PREM 19/604 contains all documents relating to London’s negotiations with the PIRA in 1981.

¹⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1087, summary of conclusions for the joint study on measures to encourage mutual understanding, Nov. 1981.

September.²⁰ On 24 September, Bernard Fox and Liam McCloskey ended their strikes themselves.²¹ The Hunger Strike ended on 3 October. Ten men had died in the Maze prison. They entered ‘... the Irish pantheon of martyrs and heroes.’²²

This chapter follows several key themes and topics. It will examine how both Dublin and London were tested by the Hunger Strike. As a Taoiseach who had voiced his aspiration for a united Ireland, many expected that Haughey would support the Hunger Strikers. However, Haughey became more concerned with staying in office. He even told one Hunger Striker’s family that he could not give his support because he felt the protest was tantamount to blackmail.²³ Meanwhile, Thatcher repeatedly denounced the Hunger Strike and refused to countenance granting any of the five demands. However, we now know that she was directly involved in secret negotiations with representatives of the PIRA.²⁴ After FitzGerald learnt of these negotiations, he wrote that he felt he could not trust Thatcher, an interesting juxtaposition with the Haughey-Thatcher relationship. FitzGerald’s role in the Hunger Strike has not been examined in detail before. The discovery of rare handwritten notes within the National Archives of Ireland reveals that his administration was actively seeking solutions to the protest. By examining his role, we will be able to gain more insight into how his relationship with Thatcher developed in his first term as Taoiseach.

A Brief Background to the 1980 and 1981 Hunger Strikes

Hunger Strikes in Ireland has roots in pre-Christian Gaelic culture. Grievances could be settled by fasting on the doorstep of your enemy. To die there meant that responsibility for your death, and the disagreement that led to it, lay with the occupant.²⁵ Hunger Strikes had been carried out during the revolutionary period of the early twentieth century by legendary

²⁰ Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, p. 319, p. 347, O’Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, p. 84. Paddy Quinn, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Patrick McGeown, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Matt Devlin, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Lawrence McKeown, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 353. Bernard Fox, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Liam McCloskey, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981.

²² George Sweeney, ‘Self-Immolative Martyrdom: Explaining the Irish Hunger Strike Tradition,’ *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, vol. 93, no. 371 (2014), pp. 337-348.

²³ Paul Graham, ‘The Effects of the Fatal Hunger Strike in the H-Blocks Long Kesh, in 1981, on the Catholic/Nationalist Community,’ MSc Thesis, Queens University Belfast, 1986, p. 46.

²⁴ See especially Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*.

²⁵ For more on the history of Hunger Strikes in Ireland see George Sweeney, ‘Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice,’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 28 (1993), pp. 421-437.

republican figures including Thomas Ashe and Terrence MacSwiney.²⁶ To carry out a Hunger Strike until death would initiate the men of the Maze into a hall of martyrs and legitimise their campaign for political status.²⁷ A striker used his or her body as the weapon.²⁸ But a Hunger Strike was not the first option.

When Nugent was taken to the Maze in 1976, he refused to wear a prison uniform. He was given a blanket which he donned during exercise, thus began the blanket protest. The blanket protest escalated to a dirty protest in 1978. Prisoners refused to wash themselves or slop out their cells.²⁹ In March 1980, four of the protestors brought a case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). They argued that conditions in the prison were inhumane. The ECHR rejected the case as the prisoners had brought about the conditions themselves. The report also criticised London's intransigence in refusing to accede to the five demands.³⁰ The ruling by the ECHR strengthened London's resolve and moved attention away from special category status to conditions within the prison.³¹ The PIRA leadership realised that their campaign was faltering. Another escalation was required.³²

The Battle Begins, the First Hunger Strike, October-December 1980

The first Hunger Strike began on 27 October 1980. It was timed to culminate at Christmas.³³ Although there was support from the public, through protests in Dublin, Britain and Northern Ireland, the Hunger Strike did not garner as much support as was hoped.³⁴ The Hunger Strike was born out of frustration at a lack of progress and public support. The question was how far the strikers would go. This was a dangerous game of cat and mouse which could play into the hands of either side, 'On the assumption that there will be no previous give on either side,

²⁶ Sweeney, 'Self-Immolative Martyrdom,' pp. 337-348. Thomas Ashe, founder member of the Irish Volunteers who died in 1917 after 5 days on Hunger Strike as a consequence of force feeding. Terrence MacSwiney, Sinn Féin TD 1918-1920, Lord Mayor of Cork 1920. MacSwiney died on Hunger Strike after 74 days in 1920.

²⁷ Sweeney, 'Irish Hunger Strikes,' pp. 421-437.

²⁸ Megan A. O'Branski, "'The Savage Reduction of the Flesh': Violence, Gender and Bodily Weaponisation in the 1981 Irish Republican Hunger Strike Protest,' *Studies on Terrorism*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2014), pp. 97-111.

²⁹ O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, pp. 20-22.

³⁰ Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, pp. 64-65.

³¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, letter from Hopkins to Alexander, 24 Mar. 1980.

³² Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, p. 65.

³³ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, note for MT, undated.

³⁴ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1695, *An Phoblacht*, 13 Dec. 1980, *The Ulster Herald*, 6 and 13 Dec. 1980.

the next catalyst will be death.’³⁵ London recognised the impact the death of a striker could have in Northern Ireland and Ireland,

There will be an emotional reaction on the streets to the death or serious deterioration in the health of a hunger striker. PIRA have prepared to exploit this, particularly in Belfast. Loyalist paramilitaries will be preparing for this disorder, but are unlikely to become involved unless the trouble spreads, either deliberately or accidentally, into Loyalist areas.³⁶

But the strikers did not anticipate the resolution of Thatcher. In private discussions from October to December, Thatcher and her Ministers reaffirmed their position. The Home and Social Affairs Committee decided that the five demands would not be conceded.³⁷ The committee asked for the agreement of Cabinet which Thatcher provided.³⁸ It was also agreed to stand by the Government’s policy on force feeding that had been introduced by Roy Jenkins, Labour Home Secretary, in 1979.³⁹ Strikers would not be force fed and prison doctors would ‘allow the inevitable deterioration - and consequent death - of a Hunger Striker to take place unless the prisoner specifically asks for medical intervention.’⁴⁰

Officially, London would stand aside. To Thatcher, the strikers were criminals. Airey Neave had been killed by the INLA and Thatcher knew something of the pain of the victims’ families. The INLA and PIRA had also attacked British soldiers, her ‘boys’ as she usually referred to them. ‘Compromise was not a word in Thatcher’s vocabulary.’⁴¹ The campaign for political status was therefore illegitimate.⁴² Humphrey Atkins recognised that Northern Ireland prisoners were a challenge to rehabilitate but felt that reinstating political status was

³⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, Stormont assessment on the Hunger Strikers, 7 Nov. 1980.

³⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, minute from Atkins to MT, 17 Dec. 1980.

³⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, minute from Whitelaw to MT, 21 Oct. 1980. The Home and Social Affairs Committee covered domestic issues. ‘H,’ as Whitelaw referred to it in the original document, was one of a number of committees within the Government. Committees were made up of Ministers and MPs from all parties in Westminster who met to discuss policy issues. Please see Simon James, *British Cabinet Government* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) for more on the role of committees within the British Government.

³⁸ *Ibid.*,

³⁹ Roy Jenkins, Baron Jenkins of Hillhead, Labour MP 1948-1977, Social Democratic Party MP 1982-1987, Home Secretary 1965-1967, 1974-1976, Leader of the Social Democratic Party 1982-1983.

⁴⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, minute from Atkins to MT, 15 Nov. 1979.

⁴¹ Peter Taylor, *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Féin* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), p. 232.

⁴² Aogán Mulcahy, ‘Claims-Making and the Construction of Legitimacy: Press Coverage of the 1981 Northern Irish Hunger Strike,’ *Social Problems*, vol. 42, no. 4 (1995), pp. 449-467.

not in their best interests. The Thatcher Government could not be seen to grant amnesty to criminals.⁴³ Brian Lenihan tried to explain to Atkins that the Hunger Strike could act as a propaganda coup for the PIRA. ‘There was a real danger that a Hunger Strike could have serious consequences in terms of public opinion ...’⁴⁴ Lenihan also asked a FCO official if Thatcher could look again at clothing and work concessions. The official continued, ‘Dublin shared the same concerns as London. The Hunger Strike could have serious repercussions for the burgeoning security initiative. Dublin was ‘quite worried.’⁴⁵ Haughey warned Thatcher via letter, ‘Once a strike starts it will probably be impossible to stop it and people will inevitably die.’⁴⁶ But Thatcher remained adamant. In order for London to understand more about the Hunger Strike, Stormont prepared a report.

The report explained the background to and aims of the strike. It stated that the PIRA was in decline, and that the Hunger Strike came ‘from PIRA’s weakness, not its strength.’ Evidence suggested that communities had lost interest in paramilitary organisations.⁴⁷ The five demands were introduced to regain popular support. This ‘allowed people to feel they were in favour of the prisoners’ right to live without necessarily supporting the PIRA. It was a ‘subtle but fundamental change in presentation, liberating support from those who would normally have withheld it in fear of appearing pro-IRA.’⁴⁸ Further public sympathy was garnered when conditions within the Maze prison were televised by a BBC World in Action documentary. Thatcher was displeased with the programme as some of the prisoners had been interviewed, and advised that ‘in future no prisoner in Northern Ireland should be permitted to be interviewed by the press or broadcasting organisations ...’⁴⁹ Criminalisation came first. Thatcher noted on the memo accompanying the report, ‘We cannot make any

⁴³ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, letter from Atkins to Whitelaw, 9 Oct. 1980.

⁴⁴ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, meeting between Lenihan and Atkins, 13 Oct. 1980. A record of this meeting is also kept in TAOIS 2010/53/875.

⁴⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, Dublin 271 to FCO, 27 Oct. 1980.

⁴⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, message from Haughey to MT, undated here. The letter is in THCR 3/1/10 and is dated 23 Oct. 1980.

⁴⁷ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, talks at Stormont, 17 Nov. 1980.

⁴⁸ Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against the IRA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), p. 231.

⁴⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, minute from Harrington to Alexander, 28 Nov. 1980.

concessions.⁵⁰ Thatcher also reaffirmed this in a response to a letter from Pope John Paul II, who had written to urge her to reconsider making concessions to the strikers,

Of the seven Hunger Strikers, six are members of the PIRA; one is a member of the INLA. All were convicted in open court of very serious crimes including murder, attempted murder, armed robbery and explosives offences. Their Hunger Strike is in pursuit of a demand for a political status which would involve their receiving privileges greater than those available to other convicted criminals in Northern Ireland. I have made it clear that the British Government cannot and will not accede to this demand.⁵¹

But the Hunger Strike would also affect the Republic of Ireland.

As leader of Fianna Fáil, some nationalists expected Haughey to support the strikers in their 'Five Demands.' Della McLuckie wrote to Haughey and demanded that he 'stop licking Thatcher's shoes and tell Britain to get out of Ireland.'⁵² The *Irish Independent* expected Haughey to tell Thatcher that 'If even one of the seven H-Block Hunger Strikers dies that will be too many.'⁵³ At a rally in Letterkenny, Síle de Valera criticised how Thatcher had handled the strike. She was deeply shocked by Thatcher's 'lack of compassion.'⁵⁴ The statement came a month before Haughey was due to meet Thatcher, and there was a rush to limit the damage the speech had made. Ray MacSharry, then Minister for Agriculture and Fianna Fáil director of elections, explained to the press that her speech did not reflect official party policy.⁵⁵ Eamonn Kennedy sent Thatcher a note explaining that Haughey 'totally and without any ambiguity rejects what was said by (de Valera).'⁵⁶ Back in the Dáil, Haughey's reaction to de Valera's speech came under harsh criticism. Gerry L'Estrange, Fine Gael TD, believed that Haughey was quiet about the H-Block issue because 'he believes in taking the

⁵⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, memo from Armstrong to MT, 7 Nov. 1980. Underline present on original document. MT also asked when the new issue civilian-style clothing would be ready. She would not let prisoners wear their own clothes but would supply them with a civilian-style uniform.

⁵¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, letter from MT to Pope John Paul II, 13 Nov. 1980.

⁵² NAI, DFA 2010/19/1695, letter from Mrs. Della McLuckie to Haughey, 14 Dec. 1980.

⁵³ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1695, *The Evening Herald*, 1 Dec. 1980.

⁵⁴ BUFVCD, 'Maze Prison Protest - Síle de Valera view,' 1980.

⁵⁵ Dwight, *Haughey's Forty Years*, p. 221. Ray MacSharry, Fianna Fáil TD 1969-1988, Tánaiste 1982.

⁵⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, letter from Kennedy to MT, 2 Nov. 1980.

two sides of the road. He is running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.’⁵⁷ The reality was that Haughey could not support the strike.

His long-term aim was to get the British to leave Northern Ireland. Although he did not know how this would be accomplished, for a Taoiseach to support convicted criminals would not endear him to either Thatcher or the unionists in Northern Ireland. Political status was unacceptable.⁵⁸ ‘Charlie knew that he was trapped in a vice, caught between sympathizing with the protesting prisoners in the H-Blocks and keeping faith with the process that he had agreed with Thatcher.’⁵⁹ Coupled with this was concern about a rise in militant republicanism. ‘... Haughey thought that if they started voting, they might want more and more radical change.’⁶⁰ Haughey offered to send a ‘go-between’ to find a compromise, but Thatcher ignored his help.⁶¹

Thatcher and Haughey were due to meet before Christmas 1980. They had had a short meeting at the December EEC summit in Luxembourg where Thatcher had promised to look again at what was on offer to the prisoners.⁶² In contradiction to London’s aforementioned policy, she had wondered ‘if it could be dressed up differently’ but emphasised that the government’s concerns lay with the ‘dignity’ of the prisoners, i.e. the conditions they were held in.⁶³ Thatcher also told Haughey that the H-Block issue had been a topic of discussion for some months past. London was not taking the situation lightly.⁶⁴ According to London’s record of the meeting, Thatcher read out a list of concessions that had been available since March 1980, but these had been rejected by the prisoners. She told Haughey that she had already taken “a lot of stick” for this and that no new concessions could

⁵⁷ ‘Supplementary Estimates, 1980: Leave to Intro.,’ *Dáil Éireann Debate*, 4 Nov. 1980, vol. 323, no. 8. Gerry L’Estrange, *Fine Gael TD 1965-1987*. Minister of State at the Department of Finance 1981, Government Chief Whip 1981.

⁵⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/930, meeting between Haughey and MT, Dublin Castle, 8 Dec. 1980.

⁵⁹ Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach*, p. 231.

⁶⁰ Quote by Bik McFarlane in Walker, *Hunger Strikes*, p. 103.

⁶¹ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, discussion at British Embassy, 5 Nov., 7 Nov. 1980. Haughey’s team were Dermot Nally, Secretary to the Government, Andrew O’Rourke, Secretary of the Irish DFA, David Neligan, Assistant Secretary in the DFA and Walter Kirwan, Assistant Secretary in the Department of the Taoiseach. A record of the meeting is also kept in NAI, DFA 2010/19/1651 and TNA UK, PREM 19/282.

⁶² The meeting lasted 35 minutes. CAC, THCR 6/1/2/2, MT engagement diary, entry for 1 Dec. 1980.

⁶³ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, Haughey meeting with MT in Luxembourg, 1 Dec. 1980. London has records of this meeting in TNA UK, PREM 19/221 and TNA UK, PREM 19/507.

⁶⁴ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1728, Haughey meeting with MT in Luxembourg, 1 Dec. 1980.

be made now that a Hunger Strike had begun.⁶⁵ Before the meeting broke up, it was agreed that a re-examination of the concessions available would be undertaken. Thatcher and Haughey would also meet at official Anglo-Irish level.

The start of the Hunger Strikes meant that Thatcher's personal security was now paramount. In light of this, it was agreed that Thatcher would fly in and out of Dublin on 8 December instead of staying the night.⁶⁶ In the course of the meeting, Haughey told Thatcher that even if one of the strikers died, 'some face saving formula could, no doubt, be found.' Haughey also pressed Thatcher to talk to the prisoners. But she felt that would be a waste of time as she was 'not sure if the prisoners had the authority, themselves, to come off...' Haughey told her that the 'situation was confused.' Hughes seemed to be the leader and more effort should be made to communicate with him. Haughey warned her that the Hunger Strike was already gaining support for 'the Provos' in Belfast.⁶⁷ Interestingly, London's record of the Throne Room Summit makes little mention of the Hunger Strike. According to it, Thatcher referred to Éamon de Valera's view that violence would not work against Northern Ireland. It also states that Thatcher hoped to communicate a new rule on civilian-style clothing to conforming prisoners, but that there would be 'no surrender' to violence. Haughey told Thatcher that the only way to undermine violence was to continue to work on politics. Thatcher told Haughey that she would stand by the guarantee given to the unionist majority.⁶⁸

Following the December Anglo-Irish summit, Paisley demanded to meet Thatcher to discuss the Hunger Strike and her plans for working with Dublin. At a time of heightened tension, the Paisley meeting rattled Thatcher. Paisley had already told her via telegram in October that 'Any concessions to the IRA H-Block murderers will be a grave insult and betrayal ... It will be viewed in Northern Ireland as the beginning of an amnesty and final capitulation of the IRA objectives.'⁶⁹ 'During their meeting in December, she rejected his summation that the protestant community was being 'treated as second-class citizens.'⁷⁰

⁶⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/221, MT meeting with Haughey, 1 Dec. 1980.

⁶⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/928, meeting with MT-considerations and questions, 31 Oct. 1980. Also NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/876.

⁶⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2010/53/930, meeting between Haughey and MT, Dublin Castle, 8 Dec. 1980.

⁶⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/507, meeting between MT and Haughey, 8 Dec. 1980.

⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/282, Paisley to MT, 23 Oct. 1980.

⁷⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, meeting between Paisley and MT, 19 Dec. 1980.

Douglas Hurd, one of Thatcher's long-serving ministers and future Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, concluded that although she aligned herself with unionism, 'she found discussing Irish matters with the Unionists up-hill work.'⁷¹

Loyalist prisoners also began a Hunger Strike on 11 December, although it was clear that their protest was half-hearted. *The Newsletter* suspected that the loyalist Hunger Strike was a tactical move, orchestrated by the NIO, to enable concessions to be granted to the republican Hunger Strikers.⁷² Loyalists abandoned their protest on 17 December. They warned that they 'reserved the right' to start one up again in future. Michael Alexander noted that 'we need not, I think, take this very seriously.'⁷³ Things came to a head in the Maze prison.

On 16 December 1980, prison doctors reported that the strikers were becoming weaker.⁷⁴ By 18 December, McKenna was hours from death and had been transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital. In a last minute attempt to save his friend, Hughes took advice from Father Denis Faul, who assisted the prison chaplain.⁷⁵ Faul had seen the latest British proposal and assured Hughes that it was worth taking. Hughes, too weak to fully comprehend what the document actually said, accepted the deal and called off the strike. Hughes saved his friend, but soon realised that the new document, which was a statement by Atkins to the Commons, was a rehash of what London had said all along.⁷⁶ The prisoners would be able to wear civilian-style clothing during recreation and visiting time. Protestors who gave up their fast would be put into clean cells and association between wings would begin. Political status would not be granted, and the prisoners felt that they had been hoodwinked.⁷⁷ London knew they had 'scored a notable victory over the IRA: they know it and the people of Northern

⁷¹ Hurd interviewed for 'Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,' RTÉ, 2013. Douglas Hurd, Baron Hurd of Westwell, Conservative MP 1974-1997, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1984-1985, Home Secretary 1985-1989, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs 1989-1995.

⁷² NAI, DFA 2010/19/1695, *The News Letter*, 17 Dec. 1980.

⁷³ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Alexander note to MT, 17 Dec. 1980.

⁷⁴ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1695, *The Irish Press*, 16 Dec. 1980, *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 Dec. 1980.

⁷⁵ Father Denis Faul, Irish Catholic priest and civil rights campaigner. Codename 'The Angel,' a key go-between the Hunger Strikers and British Government. Faul negotiated with the MI6 officer Michael Oatley.

⁷⁶ PRONI, PCC 1/9/22, statement by Atkins, 4 Dec. 1980, O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, pp. 30-31. Atkins original statement can be found at 'Northern Ireland Prisoners (Privileges),' Commons sitting of 4 Dec. 1980, Hansard HC [207-278] cc. 271-274.

⁷⁷ Authors who agree that the strikers were tricked are Walker, *Hunger Strikes*, Ross, *Smashing H-Block*, Beresford, *Ten Men Dead* and Gerry Adams *Hope and History* (London and Kerry: Brandon, 2003).

Ireland know it. But we have nothing to gain and much to lose from self-congratulation; the facts can speak for themselves.’⁷⁸ Atkins concluded that ‘the seven H-Block Hunger-Strikers must have “grasped the fact” that the British Government was not going to give them political status.’⁷⁹ Yet ‘The failure to reach a solution, when one appeared eminently possible, is one of the great ‘if only’s [*sic*] of history. If agreement had been reached there would have been no second Hunger Strike ...’⁸⁰ The battle may have been won, but the war was far from over.

‘Crime is crime is crime’: The Second Hunger Strike, March-October 1981

As Dublin and London breathed a sigh of relief over the end of the 1980 hunger strike, the prisoners in the Maze became frustrated. They had gained nothing from their 53 day fast, whereas Thatcher had sealed her reputation as the ‘Iron Lady.’ The Thatcher government were informed in January that another Hunger Strike was on the cards. Michael Hopkins, an official from the NIO, warned that an announcement was imminent.⁸¹ To shift focus away from the rumours, the Government worked on ending the dirty protest.⁸² Its initiatives, including releasing Pauline McLaughlin, a Republican prisoner, on health grounds, were made public in the hope that it would put London in a ‘good position’ should a second Hunger Strike be announced.⁸³ The second republican Hunger Strike began on 1 March 1981.

The second Hunger Strike was organised by Sands, who replaced Hughes as Officer Commander of the PIRA prisoners. Sands felt he was,

... but another of those wretched Irishmen born of a risen generation with a deeply rooted and unquenchable desire for freedom. I am dying not just to attempt to end the barbarity of H-Block, or to gain the rightful recognition of a political prisoner, but primarily because what is lost in here is lost for the Republic and those wretched oppressed whom I am deeply proud to know as the ‘risen people.’⁸⁴

⁷⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, minute from Atkins to MT, 23 Dec. 1980.

⁷⁹ NAI, DFA 2010/19/1695, *The Irish Times*, 19 Dec. 1980.

⁸⁰ Taylor, *Provos*, p. 236.

⁸¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, letter from Hopkins to Alexander, 9 Jan. 1981.

⁸² London agreed with the prison governor that half of the prisoners, on a selected wing, would be moved to clean, furnished cells to tempt them off their demonstration. The other half would be moved to clean, unfurnished cells. The move went well, and when the prisoners did not foul their new cells all were given furniture. The government then planned to give conforming prisoners civilian-style clothing, alluding to one of their five demands. See TNA UK, PREM 19/503.

⁸³ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Staples (Dublin) 10 to FCO and NIO, 12 Jan. 1981.

⁸⁴ Sands, *The Diary*, pp. 9-10.

The timing of the second Hunger Strike was important. The crisis would come at Easter, an important date in the nationalist calendar. Easter was ‘traditionally the time for expressions, verbal and physical, of Republican sentiment in Ireland north and south.’⁸⁵ The prisoners decided to stagger strikers to maximise publicity. Thatcher would be put under intense pressure. Shortly after the start of the strike, she reiterated her position.

In a show of solidarity with the unionist community, Thatcher visited Northern Ireland on 5 March. She told the crowd in Belfast that the prisoner’s demands for political status were invalid because, ‘There is only criminal murder, criminal bombing and criminal violence. We will not compromise on this. There will be no political status.’⁸⁶ In the Commons, Atkins said that the government would handle this Hunger Strike the same way as the first, ‘... we shall not give way on the issue of political status under pressure of further protest action ...’⁸⁷ On the same day as Thatcher’s visit, Frank Maguire, the Independent Republican MP for Fermanagh-South Tyrone, died suddenly of a heart attack. A seat was now vacant, a by-election on the horizon. The strikers hatched a plan.

Maguire’s death gave the strikers an opportunity to hit the Thatcher government where it hurt. What better way to grab their attention than by having a protestor elected to the Commons? Thatcher wanted to stop Sands from standing, but an investigation into the law around prisoners and elections found that ‘Sands (was) a valid election candidate.’ In the run-up to the election, Sands was entitled to receive one postal communication, visits from an election agent (permission granted at the discretion of the Governor) and there would be no requirement for him to attend Westminster. He would be an MP but would not be entitled to wages. In effect, it was not illegal for a prisoner to stand for Parliament.⁸⁸ Members of the House could expel him, but Francis Pym, then serving as Leader of the House of Commons, thought they would not.⁸⁹ ‘The argument is that the present law may well be an ass, but that

⁸⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, letter from Sanders to Hopkins, 21 Apr. 1981.

⁸⁶ MTF, MT speech in Belfast, 5 Mar. 1981, <https://www.margareththatcher.org/document/104589>.

⁸⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Atkins statement to Commons, 3 Mar. 1981. Atkins original statement can be found at ‘Northern Ireland (Prisons),’ Commons sitting of 31 Mar. 1981, Hansard HC [113-256] cc. 131-134.

⁸⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Sands and the Fermanagh, South Tyrone by-election, background notes, undated.

⁸⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, letter from Atkins to Pym, 8 Apr. 1981 and TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Havers minute to MT, 9 Apr. 1981.

Mr. Sands was legally entitled to election and that those who voted for him knew that he was and (that he) would remain in custody.’⁹⁰ London was unable to stop Sands, but hoped his campaign could falter due to weak support.

Sands’ election campaign was a powerful one. Nationalists were presented with the opportunity to save Sands’ life by voting for him. Surely even Thatcher would not allow an MP to die? ‘Lone is your vote ... What an appeal!’⁹¹ In the prison, inmates moved from the dirty to a ‘clean’ protest so as not to detract from the Hunger Strike.⁹² London understood that the ‘handling (of) this Hunger Strike must be different from the last,’ but they continued to underestimate support outside the prison.⁹³ London hoped that the majority of nationalist voters would abstain.⁹⁴ They also speculated that Sands’ election would be used as ‘an excuse’ to call the strike off.⁹⁵ Robert Armstrong advised that both communities in Northern Ireland would watch carefully to see how Thatcher handled the strike. ‘The catholics will be hoping and the protestants will be fearing that the Government will offer some concession as a way out of the Hunger Strike.’⁹⁶ Thatcher could not falter.

Sands was elected on 19 April. He beat the unionist candidate, Harry West, by 1447 votes.⁹⁷ Armstrong advised Thatcher to keep her reaction ‘very low key.’⁹⁸ By mid-April there were reports that Sands was deteriorating. London suspected that this was a rumour to heighten nationalist emotion before Easter, but prison doctors confirmed that Sands was seriously ill.⁹⁹ News of Sands’ deterioration led to riots in Londonderry. The FCO reported that Sands had been transformed into ‘... a folk hero’ after his election to the Commons.¹⁰⁰

Thatcher was unmoved. During a question and answer session in Saudi Arabia, she rebuffed a journalist’s question on concessions with ‘There is no question of political status

⁹⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, letter from Armstrong to MT, 13 Apr. 1981.

⁹¹ Eamonn McCann interviewed for ‘Hunger Strike,’ RTÉ, 2006.

⁹² Protesting prisoners still wore a blanket but kept themselves and their cells clean.

⁹³ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Atkins minute to MT, 3 Apr. 1981.

⁹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, note from Harrington to MT, 3 Apr. 1981.

⁹⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Atkins minute to MT, 3 Apr. 1981.

⁹⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, letter from Armstrong to Alexander, 13 Apr. 1981.

⁹⁷ ‘Northern Ireland Elections, Fermanagh and South Tyrone 1973-1982,’ CAIN, <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/cfst.htm>.

⁹⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, letter from Armstrong to Alexander, 13 Apr. 1981.

⁹⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Carrington 370 to Alexander, 16 Apr. 1981.

¹⁰⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, FCO 121 to Alexander, 21 Apr. 1981.

for someone serving a sentence for crime. Crime is crime is crime. It is not political, it is crime.’¹⁰¹ Thatcher labelled the strikers as terrorists, murderers and criminals. She felt that they belonged on the periphery of society. Publicly, the strikers demands were impossible for her to acknowledge.¹⁰² The NIO felt that her attitude would lead the strikers’ families to turn to Haughey for help.¹⁰³

On 20 April, three Fianna Fáil TDs, Neil Blaney, Síle de Valera and John O’Connell, visited Sands in prison and then requested to meet with Thatcher. They believed that ‘... hours can now make a difference’ to the strikers.¹⁰⁴ Thatcher was advised that loyalists would be ‘infuriated’ if she accepted the request,

- (a) it would be seen as treating [*sic*] with the enemy;
- (b) it would be taken as a sign that the Government’s resolve to withstand terrorism was weakening; and
- (c) it would be regarded as confirmation that the visit to Sands was part of a back-door deal to which the British Government was a party.¹⁰⁵

Unionists felt the visit was ‘... something of a damp squib because it has had no outcome of substance other than the proposal that the 3 TDs should meet the Prime Minister.’¹⁰⁶ Their request was denied. During a meeting between Lenihan and the three TD’s, O’Connell surmised that ‘Thatcher’s intransigence is impressive but that there was a formula which could get the British off the hook by concessions in the field of work and other areas.’¹⁰⁷ O’Connell wondered if London could trick the strikers by granting the five demands, then rescind them. ‘They can if necessary take concessions back.’¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, MT press conference at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 21 Apr. 1981.

¹⁰² Mulcahy, ‘Claims-making and the construction of legitimacy,’ pp. 449-467.

¹⁰³ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Carrington 373 to Alexander, 16 Apr. 1981.

¹⁰⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, text of telegram from Blaney, de Valera and O’Connell, 21 Apr. 1981. John O’Connell, Fianna Fáil TD 1965-1981, 1989-1993. Ceann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann 1981-1982.

¹⁰⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, Carrington 122 to Abu Dhabi, 21 Apr. 1981. Presumably Carrington meant ‘sleeping with the enemy.’

¹⁰⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/503, FCO 122 to Alexander, 21 Apr. 1981.

¹⁰⁷ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1819, note on meeting between Lenihan, de Valera, Blaney and O’Connell, 22 Apr. 1981.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*,

Towards the end of April, Haughey wanted to touch base with Thatcher. It was not possible to arrange a meeting as Thatcher was too busy, and a summit with the Taoiseach at such a sensitive time would agitate the public in Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland. Instead, the two kept in touch through their ministers. Following a lengthy meeting with Haughey, Dermot Nally, Secretary to the Government, contacted Armstrong to ask if Thatcher had considered ‘simply (letting) Sands go ...’¹⁰⁹ In doing so, Sands’ campaign would be undermined and street disturbances could be reduced. Haughey was concerned that violence in Northern Ireland would spill over to Ireland. He felt pressurised to get some sort of movement from Thatcher.¹¹⁰ However, London felt that releasing Sands would inflame unionist opinion ‘to the point where we once again saw a resurgence of Protestant violence.’¹¹¹ For the meantime, it was safer to sit back and see what happened. Haughey continued to push his Joint Studies idea.

At the end of April, the Joint Studies group produced a report that delved into the current state of affairs and how best to carry on. It was suggested that a new Anglo-Irish Co-operation Council be established and regularly meet. Thatcher rebuffed the idea with a wavy underline and a note explaining that ‘The Irish want the word ‘council’ precisely because it conveys the very meaning we do not want it to convey. No.’¹¹² The use of the word ‘council’ may have confused people into thinking that the delegates had been elected to serve. The aim was to create an official body made up by un-elected Civil Servants from Dublin and London. Thatcher noted her concerns with Dublin’s idea,

This is the most alarming set of papers in the UK/Irish situation I have read. They reveal starkly a total difference of approach. We are trying to achieve ... co-operation and reconciliation between our two countries, i.e. UK and the Republic: They are using every study as a step towards takeover. If these papers go ahead to publication even on an agree to differ basis I am not prepared to go on with the studies [*sic*]. The Irish view ... would set Anglo-Irish relations back for years and do untold harm to

¹⁰⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/504, FCO 122 to Alexander, 27 Apr. 1981. Dermot Nally, Irish civil servant. Secretary to the Government 1980-1992. Nally represented Dublin during the Armstrong-Nally talks, and was widely respected in British circles, ‘Nally is an excellent civil servant, discreet, loyal and sensible. He is pleasant socially but is capable of taking a very robust line on instructions. He has a remarkable capacity for alcohol.’ PREM 19/1809 and FCO 87/2176.

¹¹⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/504, UKE Dublin to FCO, 22 Apr. 1981.

¹¹¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/504, minute from Armstrong to Stowe, 27 Apr. 1981.

¹¹² TNA UK, PREM 19/508, minute from Armstrong to Alexander, 1 May 1981, TNA UK, PREM 19/283, minute from Armstrong to Alexander, 1 May 1981 and Joint study on Possible New Institutional Structures, May 1981.

many Unionist people if the Protestant paramilitary groups revived. It is no longer a question of changing the wording of a few sentences. We are at the heart of the matter.¹¹³

Thatcher ordered her ministers to rewrite the report. In a draft passage entitled ‘mutual misconceptions,’ London surmised that a lack of understanding of government policies was Dublin’s biggest issue. The misunderstandings were deep rooted, but London felt that the remedy lay in increasing contacts and information exchanges.¹¹⁴ There would be no council, but they could arrange for regular discussions. Thatcher would have to trust Haughey, and Haughey would have to keep quiet.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile, Sands had reached crisis point.

When Sands died on 5 May, the Hunger Strike entered a new phase. Community support was more fervent than London had estimated. Atkins had told Thatcher that his death would result in ‘a great deal of flurry.’¹¹⁶ This was an understatement. Sands’ funeral was attended by an estimated 30,000 people, and within a week marches of support spread to Dublin.¹¹⁷ During one demonstration, which began at the General Post Office on O’Connell street, the crowd tried to storm the Chancery, a building symbolic of British law in Ireland. The Garda and Irish Army were there to stop them, and only one window was broken, but it was clear that supporters of the H-Block campaign wanted the Dáil to take a greater role.¹¹⁸ ‘Weekend World,’ a political programme televised by ITV, predicted that Haughey would support the strikes over Thatcher, ‘if this happened Thatcher would be stripped of the one element of her policy which holds out any real prospect of a settlement.’¹¹⁹ Thatcher also received additional pleas for compassion from Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, Primate of All Ireland.¹²⁰ But she still felt that it was up to the strikers’ commanders to end the protest. It was they who had made the ‘cold-blooded decision that the unfortunate men now fasting in

¹¹³ TNA UK, PREM 19/508, MT note on Anglo-Irish Joint Studies, 3 May 1981.

¹¹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/508, draft passage on “mutual misconceptions” for joint report, 29 Apr. 1981.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*,

¹¹⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/504, telephone conversation between Atkins and MT, 25 Apr. 1981.

¹¹⁷ Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, pp. 178-179.

¹¹⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/504, Figg 155 to FCO, 13 May 1981.

¹¹⁹ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1822, Brian Walden interviewed for ‘Weekend World,’ ITV, 17 May 1981.

¹²⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/504, message from O’Fiaich to MT, 13 May 1981. Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland 1977-1990.

prison are of more use to them dead than alive.’ In the meantime, Thatcher and her colleagues would continue to bear the ‘heavy load’ and ride out the storm.¹²¹

Both Thatcher and Haughey were under intense pressure as the summer of 1981 continued. On the last page of a memo on the attitudes of the catholic and protestant community, Thatcher scribbled that the catholic community was ‘more supportive’ of the Hunger Strike while ‘something should be done’ to allay protestant fears. ‘Intense hatred’ was present on both sides.¹²² Hughes’ died on 12 May. Following a briefing by Haughey, Kennedy advised Thatcher that the gap between the death of Hughes and the next striker should be exploited and a new political initiative introduced. Dublin knew that special category status was out of the question, but they again urged Thatcher to consider movement on the other demands. Kennedy added that Haughey wanted to come to London to signal a new stage of negotiations, but the point was not taken up by Thatcher or Atkins during the meeting.¹²³ Instead, Thatcher went to Northern Ireland on 28 May to meet with Church leaders and show support for ‘peace and reconciliation.’¹²⁴

On the same day as Thatcher’s visit, the ECHR wrote to London to inform the British Government that a new case could be brought forward. Sands’ sister, Marcella, had tried to launch an investigation into prison conditions. The ECHR had thrown the case out as the prisoners had imposed the conditions on themselves. The ECHR invited Britain to send a representative to an informal meeting to reach a ‘friendly settlement.’¹²⁵ Stephen Boys-Smith, then Principal Private Secretary to Atkins, had previously guessed that Dublin believed the ECHR would ‘produce a solution but are vague about that body’s involvement.’¹²⁶ On receiving the news, Thatcher was furious. She had been in Northern Ireland the day the ECHR had made its response but had not been informed about it. She felt that Boys-Smith implied that if the strikers moved they should move too. She wrote on the back,

¹²¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, message from MT to O’Fiaich, 15 May 1981.

¹²² TNA UK, PREM 19/505, MT notes at the end of an NIO memo about the protestant/catholic community, 26 May 1981.

¹²³ TNA UK, PREM 19/504, record of conversation, 13 May 1981.

¹²⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/500, letter from MT to O’Fiaich and NIO record of conversation, 28 May 1981.

¹²⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, MT note on letter from Boys-Smith to Alexander, 28 May 1981.

¹²⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, papers on the present state of the Catholic and protestant community in Northern Ireland by Boys-Smith, 26 May 1981.

This letter must have been written and the policy decided before we left Belfast to-day. I am wholly dismayed and very angry that at no time to-day was it raised with me even though S.W. Boys-Smith knew how strongly I felt about it. I propose the following course of action:

- (1) Find a highly skilled rep. [*sic*] to Strasbourg who is fully conversed with the law
- (2) Retrieve the legal point on admissibility to be agreed in Court (This point you remember was made by the A.G. (Attorney General)).
- (3) In the meantime, as the Commission they have only raised the question of possible ... security ore [*sic*] human rights. We are of course prepared to consider a friendly settlement with regard to that - i.e. correspondence. We have no further proposals to make ...
- (4) Should however the Commission wish to have facilities to (word illegible, may be fund) the visits they will of course be granted whole heartedly and immediately.
- (5) Any proposed changes must apply to all prisoners in Northern Ireland. There can be no question of special status for some. MT.¹²⁷

In response to Boys-Smith's letter, Alexander surmised that while Thatcher was content for the ECHR to carry out its investigation, she did not want to negotiate for a settlement.¹²⁸

In Dublin, Haughey had hoped to capitalise on his growing popularity by announcing a General Election. But this was delayed until June out of respect for the 48 victims of the Stardust fire in February. In the interim, the Hunger Strike had serious repercussions for Fianna Fáil.¹²⁹

Two Anti-H-Block candidates, Doherty and Agnew, stood for the Dáil in the 1981 election. Having seen Sands' success at the by-election, the DFA investigated what could be done to prevent the two from entering the Dáil. An investigation found that only prisoners who had been sentenced to hard labour were banned from standing for election. The law gave

¹²⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, MT note on letter from Boys-Smith to Alexander, 28 May 1981.

¹²⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, letter from Alexander to Boys-Smith, 29 May 1981.

¹²⁹ Farrell, 'The context of three elections,' *Ireland at the Polls, 1981, 1982 and 1987*, ed., by Howard R. Penniman and Brian Farrell, p. 7 and Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, p. 209. Stephen Wynn Boys-Smith, British civil servant. Assistant secretary at the Northern Ireland Office 1981, principle private secretary to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1981-1982. He returned to the Home Office in 1984, principle private secretary to the Home Secretary 1985-1987, under secretary of the Home Office Police Department 1989-1992.

no advice on what would happen after a prisoner was elected. The only powers Dáil members had was to issue a writ to the prisoner on the grounds that he was unable to carry out his role.¹³⁰

The election of Doherty and Agnew to the Dáil gave ‘a national profile to individuals in jail in Northern Ireland which they would never have had otherwise.’ A,

‘strong emotional reaction’ could be expected if a sitting TD died. This would give the PIRA another opportunity to mount an election campaign to fill the vacant seat. The strikes appealed ‘to potential recruits to violence and to the humane sympathies of less committed people.’¹³¹

The strikes dominated the election campaign. Haughey toured the Republic of Ireland and was met with a mixed reception. While visiting a hospital in Dun Laoghaire, a member of the crowd threw a bag of paint at him. The attacker missed, but the incident was one of many during Haughey’s campaign trail.¹³² The election resulted in a narrow majority for Fianna Fáil. The party lost two seats to Doherty and Agnew.¹³³ The election further legitimised the Anti-H-Block campaign and proved that support for the strikers existed across the border.

After the election, and with his time in the Taoiseach’s Office coming to an end, Haughey sought a meeting with Thatcher. On 16 June, Leonard Figg, British Ambassador to Ireland, sent a telegram back to London to advise that ‘in the present emotional state generated by the Hunger Strike deaths, we must try and get out of our present difficulty whereby Irish men are seen to die in British prisons and the British can’t or don’t want to stop them.’¹³⁴ The next day, Haughey sent Thatcher a message to update her on the atmosphere in Dublin. He warned that things were ‘difficult’ and were ‘going downhill.’ He asked for a meeting again as he suspected that tensions between relatives of the strikers and

¹³⁰ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1822, note on election of prisoners in Northern Ireland and Republic to Dáil Éireann, 3 June 1981.

¹³¹ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1819, briefing points for Minister, 23 June 1981.

¹³² ‘Paint misses Taoiseach,’ RTÉ Archives. <http://www.rte.ie/archives/2016/0519/789604-paint-thrown-at-haughey>. Frank Dunlop depicts the antipathy shown to Haughey in *Yes, Taoiseach*.

¹³³ Farrell, ‘The context of three elections,’ pp. 7-8.

¹³⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, Dublin 199 to FCO, 17 June 1981. Sir Leonard Figg, British diplomat. Consul-General, Milan, 1973-1977, Assistant Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Public Departments), 1977-1980, Ambassador to Ireland, 1980-1983.

the PIRA command structure could be exploited. Kennedy was sent to meet Thatcher on 23 June with a letter from Haughey. Haughey asked her to rethink the prison regime and to exploit the split between the prisoners' families and the PIRA. Thatcher pointed out that his suggestions 'went along with the salami tactics of the IRA leadership.' She felt that control over the Hunger Strike was in their hands, yet she was expected to find a solution,

It was not clear how, and in any case if HMG did succeed in solving the immediate problem, they would simply be presented with another problem to solve which further concessions would be sought ... It was for others to move.¹³⁵

Figg received further messages from Haughey in the days before he left the Taoiseach's office. In a detailed minute, Haughey made six points,

- (i) There is now a need for a major serious effort to resolve the crisis in Northern Ireland ...
- (ii) The prisoners alone will have the final voice in deciding whether the crisis is resolved
- (iii) Any discussions should be between a nominee of the prisoners and a high level representative of Her Majesty's Government.
- (iv) Though the prisoners are insisting on their five demands, there is in fact room for manoeuvre.
- (v) Any settlement need not be implemented immediately, but could be phased in over a period of, say, 6 months.
- (vi) There is now a movement in favour of settlement, and a settlement could be of a final nature: this is not "salami tactics".

Armstrong forwarded the message to Kenneth Stowe for assessment. Alarming for Thatcher, Stowe suspected that 'the nature of the message suggested a close contact between the Taoiseach and elements in the PIRA.'¹³⁶ Haughey had met with the strikers' families. However, the Doherty's later told a Queen's University Masters student that Haughey had

¹³⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, letter from Alexander to Noel Cornick, 23 June 1981.

¹³⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, minute from Armstrong to MT, 25 June 1981. Haughey also sent a message on 27 June, see TNA UK, PREM 19/505 and TAOIS 2011/127/1055. His efforts were reported by *The News Letter*, 30 June 1981.

refused to step in and help the strikers as he felt they had resorted to blackmail.¹³⁷ Haughey here was alluding to the policy followed by Éamon de Valera.

De Valera felt that a Hunger Strike was a form of blackmail.¹³⁸ In 1939 the Irish Government had released Con Lehane, a prisoner on Hunger Strike in Arbour Hill military prison. De Valera told the Dáil that the day after Lehane's release, half a dozen men went on strike. Granting concessions, therefore, endangered the public,

The alternatives we are forced to face are the alternatives of two evils, one to see men die that we do not want to see die if we can save them, the other, to permit them to bring the State and the community as a whole to disaster ... We have had to choose the lesser, and the lesser evil is to see men die rather than that the safety of the whole community should be endangered.¹³⁹

Were Haughey's messages to Thatcher coming from a place of genuine concern? Probably not. He spoke about the Hunger Strike in the lead up to the election, asserting that he had 'constantly sought by every means open to me to secure a humanitarian solution that would avoid loss of life.'¹⁴⁰ Yet he never detailed how a humanitarian solution could be found. If Thatcher had allowed a meeting to go ahead, he would have been seen as the big wig of Anglo-Irish relations in the Dáil. Perhaps he had another idea to present to Thatcher but it appears he was desperate to get Thatcher to make a move on the strikes so that he could save himself. It was not to be.

On 22 June, FitzGerald told Figg that he expected to form a coalition government with the Irish Labour Party by the end of the month. He was prepared to make the Hunger Strike a priority, and indicated that he wanted to meet Thatcher urgently. Figg guessed that

¹³⁷ Paul Graham, 'The Effects of the Fatal Hunger Strike in the H-Blocks Long Kesh, in 1981, on the Catholic/Nationalist Community,' MSc Thesis, Queens University Belfast, 1986, p. 46.

¹³⁸ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. One*, p. 614.

¹³⁹ Éamon de Valera, 'Prisoners on Hunger Strike: Ministerial statement,' Dáil Éireann debate 9 Nov. 1939, vol. 77, no. 8. See also Ronan Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: A Will to Power* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Mary Rogan, *Prison Policy in Ireland: Politics, Penal-Welfarism and Political Imprisonment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011) for more on the history of Fianna Fáil and Irish Hunger Strikes.

¹⁴⁰ Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, p. 489.

FitzGerald did not have any new ideas, but the prospect of more deaths would force him into thinking of one.¹⁴¹

FitzGerald and the Hunger Strikes

FitzGerald was able to form a majority, albeit a small one, with Labour and became Taoiseach on 30 June 1981. The strikes commanded his attention from the beginning of his first term.¹⁴² He did not believe the prisoners should be granted political status. He telephoned Thatcher on 1 July to outline his position. He felt that the situation was urgent and should be prioritised. He advised that the first thing to do was to push ahead with the Joint Studies. By focusing on this, he felt sure that a solution to the Hunger Strike could be found.¹⁴³ Figg advised Thatcher to follow FitzGerald's advice and allow the ICJP to talk to the strikers. 'While we may not agree with him about their importance we should not refuse what he asks. If we turn down his request we shall get off to a bad start here.'¹⁴⁴ During a telephone conversation with Father Oliver Crilly, a member of the ICJP, Martin Burke, Private Secretary to the Taoiseach, made the following notes; 'Vanquish, exploit. Speed and access.'¹⁴⁵ Crilly advised that urgent access to the strikers was paramount to ending their fast. The Hunger Strike had caused the Irish public profound frustration.¹⁴⁶ Popular feeling was that the issue would be solved if Thatcher could soften her position and concede to some of the demands. Dublin was convinced that London had failed to comprehend the 'well-founded character' of Dublin's concerns.¹⁴⁷ Thatcher remained resolute. Instead of persuading her, FitzGerald pursued a new tactic: correspondence with the strikers. He was encouraged by a report made by the ICJP on 3 June.

The Commission suggested that London should look again at clothing, recreation and work.¹⁴⁸ In a minute on 2 July, Michael Alexander suggested that they could utilise the ICJP

¹⁴¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, Dublin 206 to NIO, 22 June 1981.

¹⁴² O'Kane, *Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland Since 1980*, p. 25.

¹⁴³ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1087, record of a telephone conversation between FitzGerald and MT, 1 July 1981. Also in TNA UK, PREM 19/508.

¹⁴⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, Dublin 223 to Deskby, 1 July 1981.

¹⁴⁵ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1824, notes taken during telephone conversation between Burke and Crilly, undated (could have been 23 or 26 June). Father Oliver Crilly, member of the ICJP, relative of Francis Hughes. Martin Burke, Irish civil servant. Private Secretary to the Taoiseach.

¹⁴⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, UKE Dublin 233 to FCO, 10 July 1981.

¹⁴⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, UKE Dublin 277 to FCO, 31 July 1981.

¹⁴⁸ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 367-368.

as it was ‘active and on the doorstep.’ Alexander also noted that, as a Catholic body, the ICJP would be trusted by the prisoners. Thatcher dismissed the idea of it acting as ‘mediators,’ but at a later meeting agreed to allow the Commission to visit the strikers.¹⁴⁹ Prior to a prison visit, the ICJP met with Michael Alison, Minister of State in the NIO, to go over its proposals.¹⁵⁰

The eight-hour meeting was ‘friendly and engaging’ but not ground breaking. Alison operated under Thatcher’s instructions and ‘stonewalled’ any suggestion of political status. Thatcher observed that the clergy ‘do like talking,’ and commented that lengthy meetings ‘tries one’s patience, doesn’t it’ but Alison assured her he did not mind. She gushed, ‘I think you are marvellous and I am very grateful.’¹⁵¹ Thatcher herself would not have had the patience to sit through such a lengthy discussion. Alison advised Thatcher that the ICJP would visit the strikers. Dublin also met with the ICJP.

Although the PREM papers tend to have markings and, often, notes from Thatcher, it is rare to find such evidence within the Dublin files.¹⁵² However, within the DFA documents there is a lengthy series of notes, taken by an unknown official, that outline the FitzGerald administration’s thoughts on the Hunger Strike. The annotations also recount a meeting with the ICJP. The notes deduce that, ‘PIRA in a spot - can’t reject, if prisoners accept, get out of way.’ They also refer to Alison’s meeting with the ICJP and how he was acting under Thatcher’s instructions, ‘Alison - lady behind veil.’ London was ‘under the microscope’ and, according to John Kelly, Minister for Foreign Affairs, was afraid of ‘some new thing of equal (propaganda) value to PIRA.’¹⁵³ The notes go on to detail ‘Operation Santa Claus.’ If the strikers agreed to come off, within 15 minutes a package containing their own clothing would

¹⁴⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, minute from Alexander, 2 July 1981 and letter from Rickett to Boys-Smith, 3 July 1981. MT’s wiggly underline means that she thought this point was nonsense.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Alison, Conservative MP 1964-1997. Minister of State at the NIO 1979-1983, Parliamentary Private Secretary 1983-1987.

¹⁵¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, record of conversation between Alison and MT, 4 July 1981. MT was impatient and liked to get to the point. This is why she preferred Haughey to FitzGerald. See chpt. three.

¹⁵² In the case of Haughey, this is due to paper trails. Haughey did not want to leave too much evidence behind beyond official memos and minutes. In FitzGerald’s case, it is probable that his analysis on briefings would be done verbally, as he was prone to lengthy and in-depth analysis.

¹⁵³ John M. Kelly, Fine Gael TD 1973-1989. Minister for Foreign Affairs, June- Oct. 1981.

be taken to them. Logue told Kelly that the ICJP would visit the prison. In summation, the following was agreed,

See Provisional Sinn Féin tomorrow. Go on Friday to prisoners. Endorse and put pressure on T. Get a senior Labour politician to (ask Thatcher about Hunger-Strike during) P.Q. (Prime Minister's question time) - does the govert. [*sic*] accept the outline ... ICJP should not give up its effort.¹⁵⁴

The ICJP released a statement on 8 July outlining the meetings it had had with Alison and with the strikers. The ICJP accused London of delaying the NIO's visit to the Hunger Strikers from 6 to 8 July. By the time the visit occurred early in the morning of 8 July, Joe McDonnell had died.¹⁵⁵ The ICJP then accused London of sending an unsatisfactory statement to the prisoners through the NIO.¹⁵⁶ The same day Atkins was instructed to release a statement outlining what was on offer if the hunger striker's gave up their fast.¹⁵⁷ FitzGerald then sent Thatcher a three page letter on 10 July, urging her to listen to the recommendations of the ICJP - he agreed with their viewpoint. FitzGerald warned that London's refusal to work with Dublin would result in a 'danger of a serious and progressive deterioration in bilateral relations.'¹⁵⁸ Thatcher's response on 14 July outlined again her belief that the power to end the strikes did not lie with her. Thatcher asked FitzGerald,

... not ... (to) be misled into thinking that this problem is susceptible of an easy solution, wanting only a little flexibility on Her Majesty's Government part. It is not ... in our attitude to these demands we are not seeking to be difficult for the sake of saving face.¹⁵⁹

FitzGerald had telephoned her to ask for a meeting on 1 July.¹⁶⁰ Throughout Haughey's term as Taoiseach, London had emphasised that Anglo-Irish meetings should take place once a

¹⁵⁴ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1824, notes taken during meeting, undated (sometime in early July). There is no official record of this meeting. Those present at the meeting were Brian Gallagher, ICJP Chairman, Hugh Logue, SDLP, Kelly, Father Crilly, ICJP member and 'Jones,' possibly Kelly's Secretary.

¹⁵⁵ Joe McDonnell, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. McDonnell died after 61 days on Hunger Strike.

¹⁵⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1958, statement by ICJP, 8 July 1981.

¹⁵⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, statement by Atkins, 8 July 1981.

¹⁵⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1056, letter from FitzGerald to MT, 10 July 1981. Also in CAC, THCR 3/1/15.

¹⁵⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, message from MT to FitzGerald, 14 July 1981. Also in NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1056.

¹⁶⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/508, No. 10 record of telephone conversation, 1 July 1981. Also in TAOIS 2011/127/1087.

year. Dublin had interpreted this to mean once every six months, a move that London resisted.¹⁶¹ These meetings caused a media circus and usually resulted in speculation that other negotiations were conducted in secret. A compromise was reached. A Ministerial meeting was organised on 10 July in London.¹⁶²

Kelly, James Dooge, leader of Fine Gael in the Seanad and officials from the DFA and Department of the Taoiseach, met with Ian Gilmour, the Lord Privy Seal and Atkins.¹⁶³ It was again agreed that the key to progress was regular meetings and information sharing. The team from Dublin were 'insistent and frank' while Atkins was 'somewhat shaken by the intensity as well as the extent of information shown in the Irish presentation.' FitzGerald wanted to know why Thatcher had allowed the ICJP into the prison if no consideration of movement was possible. And why had Thatcher delayed contacting the ICJP even though FitzGerald had personally asked her to? The delegation from Dublin also asked how the crisis would end. As a result of these questions, London was 'non-committal [*sic*] and defensive.' Atkins' response to the final question was described as 'pat and unoriginal.' Dooge advised that instead of looking at the five demands as a set of principles, London could look at them as differences.¹⁶⁴ That way, a solution could be achieved without a sense of defeat. Atkins said that he understood Dooge's concerns and that the problem was being treated with urgency in London. 'They had done little since last October but rack their brains to find a way forward.'¹⁶⁵

At another meeting on 13 July, Dooge warned Peter Carrington, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, that the Hunger Strike was acting as a propaganda parade for the PIRA.¹⁶⁶ 'Every death ... was a victory.' The Hunger Strike garnered global media attention, with support emanating from the US in particular. This had resulted in 'an

¹⁶¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Armstrong note to Coles, 14 Jan. 1982.

¹⁶² TNA UK, PREM 19/508, Armstrong minute to Whitmore, 6 July 1981.

¹⁶³ James Dooge, Fine Gael. Leader of Fine Gael in the Seanad, 1982-1987, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Oct. 1981- Mar. 1982, Leader of Seanad Éireann, 1982-1987. Ian Gilmour, Baron Gilmour of Craigmillar, Conservative MP 1962-1992. Lord Privy Seal 1979-1981.

¹⁶⁴ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1822, meeting at FCO, 10 July 1981 and also NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1056.

¹⁶⁵ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, meeting with British Ministers in London, 10 July 1981.

¹⁶⁶ Peter Alexander Carrington, 6th Baron Carrington, Conservative. Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1979-1982.

internationalism of the problem.’¹⁶⁷ The Hunger Strike also caused problems in Dublin. Two strikers had been elected to the Dáil, ‘Northern Ireland was having an influence in Ireland, in a way and to an extent not seen before. It was leading to a destabilisation of public opinion.’¹⁶⁸ Figg reported that recruitment into the Irish Army was outnumbered by PIRA recruitment.¹⁶⁹ Dublin would rather reach a solution and face criticism than allow more strikers to die. Meanwhile, London considered permitting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) into the prison.

Thatcher allowed the ICRC into the prison on 16 July. On 23 July, it met with Alison to discuss its findings. It concluded that there was nothing it could do to break the deadlock, so it instead concentrated on prison conditions. It felt the major issues were overcrowding and segregation. Alison asked if the ICRC had formed an opinion of the strikers’ attitude towards the government. Were their five demands really aimed at getting small changes to the prison regime or was it a question of pride? The ICRC pointed out that it had not visited the strikers themselves, but it felt that the general atmosphere towards the government’s policy was one of ‘we’ve heard it all before.’ The ICRC concluded that the major problems in Northern Ireland prisons were psychological ones which resulted in ‘a sense of tension and struggle.’¹⁷⁰ Following the Red Cross visit, the Press Office in Dublin received a telephone call from prominent Republican, Bernadette McAliskey.¹⁷¹ McAliskey accused FitzGerald of siding ‘with the British Government when Kieran Doherty is about to die.’ Liam Hourican, Irish Government Press Secretary, surmised that FitzGerald had ‘regretted the failure of Tuesday morning’s visit which seemed to be attributable to unreasonable pre-conditions demanded by the prisoners.’¹⁷² McAliskey wanted to know how the Government knew what had happened when they were not talking ‘to the people who have the information.’ Hourican replied that if she wanted to pass on any information, he would forward it.¹⁷³ Little did Hourican know that London was talking to the PIRA.

¹⁶⁷ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1824, discussion between Minister Dooge, Lord Carrington, and officials, 13 July 1981.

¹⁶⁸ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, meeting with British Ministers in London, 10 July 1981.

¹⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, Figg 235 to Boys-Smith, 14 July 1981.

¹⁷⁰ PRONI, NIO 10/13/2A, meeting between the ICRC and Alison, 27 July 1981.

¹⁷¹ Bernadette McAliskey, Irish civil rights leader and spokesperson for the Smash H-Block campaign.

¹⁷² Liam Hourican, Irish civil servant. Government Press Secretary 1981-1982.

¹⁷³ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, letter from Hourican to FitzGerald, 22 July 1981.

At the beginning of July, a secret channel between the Thatcher Government and the PIRA was opened. Representing London was the Mountain Climber, now known to be MI6 Officer Michael Oatley.¹⁷⁴ Brendan Duddy, a businessman from Londonderry, was codenamed 'Soon,' and was tasked with transporting secret messages to the PIRA leadership.¹⁷⁵ Through a series of eight telephone conversations between 4-6 July, Duddy updated Oatley on what could be done to end the strike. The PIRA asked for a draft offer so that it could be carefully perused and any difficulties highlighted. Duddy also mentioned that PIRA was 'very worried about the time scale now involved. He said that the situation would be irreparably damaged if a protestor died and he urged HMG to act with the utmost haste.'¹⁷⁶ Contained within PREM 19/506 is, arguably, one of the most surprising discoveries of the Thatcher files.

On a document entitled 'Message to be sent through the channel,' Thatcher's handwriting covers the page.¹⁷⁷ Her refusal to talk to terrorists, as she deemed them, was temporarily set aside during the Hunger Strikes. The message was sent but was rejected by PIRA due to its tone. Thatcher then advised that the original deal should be redrafted, hence why her handwriting appears on the document.¹⁷⁸ This was a risky line to take. If the Hunger Strike was called off, it would be too risky to withdraw concessions. Yet too firm a stance would result in further deaths.¹⁷⁹ London hoped the redrafted offer would be accepted, going as far as outlining what would happen when the Hunger Strike was called off.¹⁸⁰ But the PREM files confirm that an 'unsatisfactory' reply was made by the PIRA.¹⁸¹ '... we have a clear acknowledgment ... that the Hunger Strikers have no power to give up; and we have sent an official in to clarify our position to the Hunger Strikers and they have said that they do not wish to listen.'¹⁸² On 20 July the channel was closed by Atkins.¹⁸³ What were the

¹⁷⁴ Michael Oatley, MI6 officer used as a go-between the British government and the PIRA. Codenamed 'Mountain Climber.'

¹⁷⁵ Duddy's role was revealed in a 2008 documentary by the BBC, 'The Secret Peacemaker.' Brendan Duddy, businessman. Used as a go-between the British government and the PIRA. Duddy was codenamed 'soon' during the Hunger-Strike negotiations.

¹⁷⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, London 228 to Deskby, July 1981.

¹⁷⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, 'message to be sent through the channel,' 6 July 1981.

¹⁷⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, letter from Whitmore to Boys-Smith, 8 July 1981.

¹⁷⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, conversation between Atkins, Whitelaw, Gilmour, Pym, Woodfield and MT, 6 July 1981.

¹⁸⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, 'What happens when the protest ends?' undated.

¹⁸¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, minute from Atkins to MT, 7 July 1981.

¹⁸² TNA UK, PREM 19/506, letter from Boys-Smith to Alexander, 21 July 1981.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*,

consequences of Thatcher's actions? FitzGerald was made aware of the secret negotiations by the ICJP and later wrote that he felt he had 'one hand tied behind (his) back' when talking to Thatcher,

For I would naturally have liked to confront them with - and would have liked even more to be able to make public - my knowledge of the furtive contacts on their behalf with the IRA, which seemed to have proved fatal to the resolution of the problem.¹⁸⁴

This was compounded by the fact that the Duke of Norfolk had also visited the strikers in prison on 22 July. He told one of the protestors, Paddy Quinn, that the Hunger Strike was 'a waste of life' and asked him to 'come off it' before leaving.¹⁸⁵ The meeting was conducted in secret, much to the annoyance of Dublin who, at the time, was drafting a detailed briefing for FitzGerald. FitzGerald had taken charge of Northern Ireland policy so it was crucial that all relevant information should be available for him to read.¹⁸⁶ Figg apologised for the incident and assured Dooge that the visit was inconsequential. He did not know about the meeting until he had read about it in the papers. As the visit occurred in the week leading up to the Royal Wedding, the media felt that it must have had some significance.¹⁸⁷ Why would a Duke travel to the Maze prison during a hectic week for the Royal family? FitzGerald's representatives let Thatcher know that they were aware of the channel and the Duke's visit, and they hoped that in future relations 'could be somewhat franker.'¹⁸⁸ It was a case of they know we know, and Thatcher was warned that 'The Taoiseach feels we have let him down and I hope we can try and do what we can to show that, whatever the facts of the matter, we care about his feelings.'¹⁸⁹

During the secret talks, Joe McDonnell died.¹⁹⁰ The channel had opened too late and another life had been lost. The channel was the last option for the Thatcher Government. It had come under increasing pressure to make a move, but they could not end the Hunger

¹⁸⁴ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 371. According to FitzGerald, the ICJP was told this by Gerry Adams.

¹⁸⁵ Beresford, *Ten Men Dead*, p. 331.

¹⁸⁶ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, call by British Ambassador to department, 24 July 1981.

¹⁸⁷ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, *The Evening Herald*, 24 July 1981.

¹⁸⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/283, minute from Armstrong to MT, 30 July 1981.

¹⁸⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, UKE Dublin 271 to FCO, 28 July 1981. Also in TAOIS 2011/127/1057 and DFA 2011/39/1884.

¹⁹⁰ Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, p. 15.

Strike. On 28 July, Bishop Cathal Daly, the families of Kevin Lynch and Quinn and Mr. Canning, a public representative, met to try to find a way of ending the strike.¹⁹¹ They wanted to ‘devise a formula allowing the Hunger Strikers to quit “with honour” ...’ Following the meeting, a delegation was sent to Belfast to confront Gerry Adams, policy coordinator for the Anti-H-Block party and future president of Sinn Féin, who had refused to join the meeting, to ‘insist that they attempt to end the Hunger Strike or face public denunciation from certain families.’ Adams refused.¹⁹² The means to end the Hunger Strike did not lie with Dublin or London, or the strikers themselves, and now the prisoners’ superiors refused to act. In desperation, FitzGerald turned to US President Ronald Reagan.¹⁹³

The protest had been followed closely by passionate Irish-Americans, and had resulted in some unrest. Philip McKearney, British Consul in Boston, sent Kevin White, the Mayor, a picture of his home after slogans including ‘stop the hungers now’ and ‘IRA’ had been sprayed across it. McKearney explained that his home had been extensively damaged during anti-H-Block demonstrations over the summer of 1981. The protestors painted his door step with blood and he had received death threats.¹⁹⁴ Thatcher had received resolutions from State Senates urging her to end the strikes. These messages were sympathetic to the PIRA. They referred to the strikers as ‘Irish Patriots’ and the Hunger Strike as a ‘human rights crisis.’¹⁹⁵ Where once the strikes had been a minor story in the American press, by June interest in the story had peaked.¹⁹⁶ Press coverage had ‘dramatically improved the image of the PIRA among thirty million Irish-Americans and reversed a five-year trend of declining financial support of the PIRA.’¹⁹⁷ Nicholas Henderson, British Ambassador to the USA, felt that American input was pivotal as Irish-American groups, such as the Irish Northern Aid Committee (NORAI), provided the PIRA with money and weapons.¹⁹⁸ NORAI had posted full-page adverts for pro-hunger strike paraphernalia including t-shirts and bumper

¹⁹¹ Bishop Cathal Daly, Irish Roman Catholic Priest. Relative of Paddy Daly who took part in the Irish War of Independence. Kevin Lynch, PIRA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Lynch died after 71 days on Hunger Strike.

¹⁹² NAI, DFA 2011/39/1820, memo from Hourican to FitzGerald, 30 July 1981. Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin 1983-2018, MP 1997-2011, TD 2011-2018.

¹⁹³ Ronald Reagan, actor turned Republican politician. 40th President of the United States 1981-1989.

¹⁹⁴ NAI, DFA 2011/42/3, letter from McKearney to White, 4 Aug. 1981.

¹⁹⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, resolution adopted by the Massachusetts State Senate on 18 May 1981, 29 May 1981.

¹⁹⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, Washington 1577 to FCO, 20 May 1981.

¹⁹⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, Washington 1931 to FCO, 24 June 1981.

¹⁹⁸ Nicholas Henderson, British diplomat. Ambassador to the USA 1979-1982.

stickers with the slogan ‘IRA all the way.’¹⁹⁹ American investment in Northern Ireland had suffered due to the riots in Belfast and Londonderry. Although American interference could be ‘ignorant and partisan,’ Reagan had a card to play.²⁰⁰

Knowing that Reagan held sway with Thatcher, FitzGerald asked him to intervene. This move was labelled as ‘bizarre’ by *The Daily Express*, but the paper did not understand the influence Reagan had over Thatcher. The two were great personal friends as well as political allies.²⁰¹ Thatcher reflected that Reagan ‘... instinctively felt and thought as I did.’²⁰² The request was ultimately ignored.²⁰³ Reagan did not want to adopt a position but said he would ‘be very pleased if the ICRC were now to find a solution as they would be spared the need to take up any solution and would issue an anodyne reply.’²⁰⁴ America continued to watch the situation in Northern Ireland closely but did not raise the issue with Thatcher.²⁰⁵ Henderson met with Ted Kennedy, one of the Four Horsemen, to discuss the situation. Kennedy assured Henderson that they were working hard to undermine groups such as NORAI.²⁰⁶ The Horsemen had distinguished themselves as the peaceful Irish-American group. Kennedy added that the Horsemen did not support the strikers’ demand for political status, but they ‘found it increasingly difficult to believe that Britain was showing the flexibility necessary to avoid losing the propaganda war.’²⁰⁷ When FitzGerald cancelled a Dáil speech on the strikes on 23 July, there were rumours that he was going to give up.²⁰⁸ FitzGerald then received an invitation to meet with the strikers’ families on 27 July.

¹⁹⁹ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1913, untitled memo, 19 Sept. 1981.

²⁰⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, Washington 1959 to FCO, 25 June 1981 and Henderson 199 to FCO, 25 June 1981.

²⁰¹ For more on the special relationship, see Nicholas Wapshott, *Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher: A Political Marriage* (New York and London: Sentinel, 2007), James Cooper, *Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan: A Very Political Special Relationship* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Richard Aldous argues that MT and Reagan clashed on a number of issues, Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship* (London: Arrow, 2013).

²⁰² Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 157.

²⁰³ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, *The Sunday Tribune*, 6 Sept. 1981.

²⁰⁴ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, note from Neligan, 16 July 1981.

²⁰⁵ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 1981, *The Times*, 16 July 1981.

²⁰⁶ The Four Horsemen of Congress were Kennedy, speaker Tip O’Neill, senator Daniel Moynihan and Hugh Carey, Governor of New York. The Horsemen were sympathetic to the Republican cause and spoke every St. Patrick’s Day to drum up support.

²⁰⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/505, Washington 1930 to FCO, 24 June 1981.

²⁰⁸ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, *The Guardian*, 11 and 24 July 1981, *The Financial Times*, 11 July 1981, *The Evening Herald*, 24 July 1981, *The Irish Times*, 22 July 1981.

FitzGerald walked into a taut atmosphere. He had not been fully briefed on the secret negotiations between London and the PIRA. The families verbally attacked him. They accused him of taking the same position as Thatcher and doing nothing to help. FitzGerald reassured them that he was in daily contact with London but that he had little influence over Thatcher. His government focused on the humanitarian aspect of the strike. FitzGerald also advised the families that the emotional, and violent, protests in support of the strikers would not endear their campaign to Thatcher. The protests ‘would destroy the channels of communication open to us and weaken our leverage on the British.’ In frustration, the relatives walked out of the meeting after forty minutes. They believed that FitzGerald was not ‘dealing realistically’ with the problem. The families were desperate for a solution.²⁰⁹

August began with the deaths of Lynch and Doherty. Eight men had now died on Hunger Strike and new prisoners were volunteering each week. The consequences of the Hunger Strike were now understood to be long lasting, ‘even if the hunger strike were to end tomorrow, its consequences will be with us for a long time to come.’²¹⁰ The PIRA had made unprecedented political gains, shattering London’s notion of a lack of local support. Sympathy for the Hunger Strike was international. The PIRA had ‘succeeded in the last year in setting back the assertion and acceptance everywhere of the cause for a united Ireland on a basis of reconciliation and consent.’²¹¹ Although Irish public opinion was largely behind FitzGerald, it was difficult to gauge the effect the Hunger Strike had had on the Irish electorate.²¹² At the beginning of July, protests in Dublin were relatively small with only 400 attendees.²¹³ By the end of July, the marches had spread to rural areas and were larger and more violent.²¹⁴ The strikers’ funerals were also problematic. Aside from the large crowds, PIRA guards of honour were offensive to the unionist community and troublesome for the security forces.²¹⁵ The crisis had peaked. David Neligan, Assistant Secretary in the DFA, suggested to FitzGerald that he should consider asking Thatcher to force feed the Hunger

²⁰⁹ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1820, memo from Whelan, 28 July 1981. Also kept in NAI, DFA 2011/39/1911.

²¹⁰ PRONI, CENT 1/10/66, local effects of the Hunger Strike, 17 Aug. 1981.

²¹¹ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1820, memo from Neligan, 7 Aug. 1981.

²¹² TNA UK, PREM 19/282, Dublin 271 to FCO, 27 Oct. 1980.

²¹³ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, *The Irish Times*, 11 July 1981.

²¹⁴ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 1981, *The News Letter*, 20 July 1981, *The Cork Examiner*, 21 July 1981.

²¹⁵ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1884, *The Daily Express*, 11 July 1981, *The News Letter*, 16 July 1981.

Strikers.²¹⁶ Figg admitted to Kelly that London did not know how the Hunger Strike was going to end. ‘The strikers knew what was on offer. They did not need clarification.’²¹⁷ But Thatcher’s Government still refused to grant political status.²¹⁸ On 20 August, Michael Devine died.²¹⁹ Ten men had died on Hunger Strike. The situation seemed hopeless.

On 20 July, Quinn’s family asked for medical intervention to save his life. The Quinn’s were followed by the McGeowns on 20 August and the Devlin’s on 4 September.²²⁰ The Hunger Strikes entered a new phase. Newspapers suggested that the Hunger Strike was near collapse.²²¹ Dooge surmised that the wedge between the PIRA and the striker’s families was ‘welcome’ but he did not hold much hope for it lasting.²²² Dooge was wrong in thinking so. McCloskey’s mother told John Hume that she would end her son’s Hunger Strike when he lost consciousness.²²³ The PIRA tried to stop families from intervening but they started to as well.²²⁴ Bernard Fox was taken off because he was ‘dying too quickly.’²²⁵ The end was in sight. The Hunger Strike was faltering.²²⁶

The pressure on London was reduced as the strikers’ families vowed to end their protest.²²⁷ The Hunger Strike ended on 3 October. To ensure another Hunger Strike would not occur, three of the five demands were met by the Thatcher Government. On 6 October Jim Prior, who had replaced Atkins as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in September, announced that civilian-style clothing, free association and 50% of lost remission would be reinstated.²²⁸ Anglo-Irish relations were strained but communication between Dublin and

²¹⁶ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1820, memo from Neligan, 7 Aug. 1981.

²¹⁷ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1820, meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the British Ambassador in Government Buildings, 7 Aug. 1981. London’s record of the meeting is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/506.

²¹⁸ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1820, memo from Whelan to Collins, 14 Aug. 1981.

²¹⁹ O’Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, p. 132. Michael Devine, INLA volunteer and participant in second Hunger Strike of 1981. Devine died after 60 days on Hunger Strike.

²²⁰ Hennessey, *Hunger Strike*, p. 319, p. 347, p. 353, O’Malley, *Biting at the Grave*, p. 84.

²²¹ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1913, *The Irish Times*, *The Evening Herald*, 7 Sept. 1981, *The Daily Express*, 7 Sept. 1981, *The Sunday Times*, 13 Sept. 1981.

²²² PRONI, NIO 12/202, meeting between Prior and Dooge, 6 Sept. 1981.

²²³ PRONI, NIO 12/254, notes relating to proposed meeting between MT and the mother of L. McCloskey, 21 Sept. 1981.

²²⁴ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1913, *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 Sept. 1981, *The Evening Herald*, 16 Sept. 1981, *The Belfast Telegraph*, 18 Sept. 1981, *The Cork Examiner*, 26 Sept. 1981, *The Guardian*, 3 Oct. 1981.

²²⁵ Ken Wharton, *Northern Ireland: An Agony Continued: The British Army and The Troubles, 1980-1983* (England: Helion and Company, 2015), p. 221 and *The Evening Herald*, 25 Sept. 1981.

²²⁶ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1913, *The Financial Times*, 3 Oct. 1981, *The Belfast Telegraph*, 3 Oct. 1981.

²²⁷ NAI, DFA 2011/39/1913, *An Phoblacht*, 12 Sept. 1981.

²²⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1059, statement by Prior, 6 Oct. 1981.

London had been maintained throughout the strike. Neither side wanted to overreact to the end of the strike. Prior's official statement was sent to Dublin for assessment by FitzGerald. He found it satisfactory as it was 'conceived in a generous spirit and (represented) a genuine attempt to put the whole issue into the past.' Attention now turned to the PIRA. They had led an incredibly successful propaganda campaign throughout the strike. It was expected that they would return to violence.²²⁹

The PIRA carried out an attack on British soldiers in London on 10 October. Four days later, FitzGerald met with Carrington to discuss security. FitzGerald asked that his condolences be passed on to Thatcher. He added that the bomb had been a surprise but was not unexpected. PIRA morale was known to be low and intelligence had been unclear about what their next move would be. The NIO knew that the PIRA had little capability in Britain and lacked popular support, but they were unsure if this attack marked the start of a new campaign. The NIO guessed that the bomb had been carried out by peripheral members.²³⁰ Carrington said that attacks on mainland Britain had little effect on Northern Ireland. People there 'tended to believe that they had borne the brunt of violence to date and that incidents in Britain simply demonstrated to the British public what they, the population of Northern Ireland, had to put up with.'²³¹ In November, Armstrong suggested that Thatcher meet up with FitzGerald to discuss his constitutional crusade. Thatcher said she had 'great respect' for FitzGerald's initiative, and that she would be pleased to meet with him as long as the meeting was low key.²³² Armstrong suggested that the two leaders should meet privately, but Thatcher wanted a note taker to be present.²³³ She explained that there was a 'danger that things (that were said in private) could be twisted.'²³⁴

In the lead up to the meeting, communications between Dublin and London were regular. Prior advised that post-strike, London should view Anglo-Irish relations as 'a vehicle

²²⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1088, meeting between FitzGerald and British Ambassador, 6 Oct. 1981. Also in TNA UK, PREM 19/508.

²³⁰ NAI, DFA 2014/52/14, London 319 to Neligan, 26 Oct. 1981.

²³¹ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1088, conversation between Dooce and Carrington, 14 Oct. 1981. Also in TNA UK, PREM 19/814.

²³² NAI, DFA 2014/52/14, London 318 to Neligan, 21 Oct. 1981.

²³³ TNA UK, PREM 19/508, minute from Armstrong to MT, 16 Oct. 1981.

²³⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, No. 10 record of conversation, 6 Nov. 1981. Also kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/509.

moving along a road. He hoped it would gain speed with time but if pushed too far it could stall.' FitzGerald wanted to bring unionists and nationalists together, but Prior warned that there 'was a danger of putting the unionists into an intransigent position.'²³⁵ FitzGerald was aware that London 'might be getting fed up' but he believed in Anglo-Irish relations.²³⁶ While visiting Larne, Atkins had been warned not to meet with 'the South' as 'he would be labelled as a traitor.'²³⁷ Michael O'Leary, Tánaiste and Leader of the Labour Party, asked Prior what influence London wielded over the protestant community.²³⁸ Prior said that,

... he had discussions with them but on every occasion they "bang on" about security... They would dismiss out of hand the idea that the British guarantee maintained the border - as well as resenting deeply any suggestion that the guarantee should be changed. They talked a lot of nonsense about loyalty to the Queen.²³⁹

Prior warned that Thatcher '... would be influenced by what she believed would be the attitude of Neave. She was really a Unionist at heart.'²⁴⁰ It had been nearly a year since the last Anglo-Irish summit. Thatcher needed to officially meet with FitzGerald.

As the FitzGerald-Thatcher summit approached, the finer details of their agendas were fleshed out. Dublin suggested a joint press conference would present a united front. Michael Lillis, Head of the Anglo-Irish section in the DFA, advised FitzGerald to concentrate on three points,²⁴¹

1. Northern Ireland is a tragic situation in which words can kill. I have no interest in exploiting it politically ...
2. We should both strongly emphasise our shared humanitarian concern for the suffering of the people of Northern Ireland.

²³⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1088, meeting between FitzGerald, Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Prior, 28 Oct. 1981.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*,

²³⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1088, meeting with Prior, 28 Oct. 1981. London's record of the meeting in in TNA UK, PREM 19/509.

²³⁸ Michael O'Leary, Labour TD 1965-1987, Tánaiste 1981-1982.

²³⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1088, meeting with Prior, 28 Oct. 1981.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,

²⁴¹ Michael Lillis, Irish civil servant. Head of the Anglo-Irish section, the Department of Foreign Affairs. Part of the negotiating team for the AIA.

3. We must at all cost avoid being put into conflicting positions by the press. That would be to undermine whatever progress we can make together which, in this situation, is the only way in which progress can be made.²⁴²

On the day of the meeting, 6 November, an unnamed official from Dublin acted as note taker. The notes are brief but give insight into the key topics of conversation,

Common solidarity
 Consent c idea that support even in opposition
 To start
 Security successes
 Publication - build trust and confidence with us
 Council - be called Ministerial
 Security/court
 Gov. in N.I. [*sic*].
 Guarantee.²⁴³

A detailed briefing shows how the conversation between the two heads of government unfolded. Thatcher began by thanking FitzGerald for visiting the wounded Irish guardsmen in hospital. FitzGerald told Thatcher that his visit was intended to be a reflection of his attitude towards the PIRA and their violent tactics. Thatcher wanted to know if FitzGerald had proscribed groups such as the PIRA and INLA. FitzGerald assured her he had, although the election of Sinn Féin candidates would prove to be a headache.²⁴⁴ FitzGerald told Thatcher about his attitude towards Northern Ireland. He said,

... he felt passionately on the subject. He fully understood the position of Northern protestants. He had been full of suppressed fury since childhood at some of the attitude adopted in the South. He had bided time - but still remained of the attitude described in his book of 1972. He had to wait until he was Taoiseach to give voice to his views. In fact, he could say that he was in politics today for this purpose largely. People must

²⁴² NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1089, letter from Lillis to FitzGerald, 5 Nov. 1981.

²⁴³ NAI, DFA 2014/52/14, notes on back of record of meeting between FitzGerald and MT, 6 Nov. 1981. Also in NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1103 AND NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1089. London's record of the meeting is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/509 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1070.

²⁴⁴ The Thatcher Government proscribed Sinn Féin in 1988. See Epilogue.

be willing to take an initiative - and this had been an incidental effect that his Government had been strengthened by what he had been doing.²⁴⁵

In Ireland, the November summit was reported positively. FitzGerald was said to have launched a 'two-pronged attack' and had counteracted Haughey's 'mess.'²⁴⁶ FitzGerald claimed that the meeting was 'a great first step along the different road towards reconciliation in London' and also mentioned his support for Co-operation North. '... he was anxious to encourage the establishment of a network of links between organisations in the North and the South.'²⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Thatcher stressed that the meeting was 'all in a day's work' and felt the press attention these Anglo-Irish summits attracted was unnecessary.²⁴⁸ Her irritation is evident when she remarked that future meetings would be 'more frequent, more regular so that ... (they) are more unremarked than at present.'²⁴⁹

The November summit resulted in the establishment of the AIIGC, an official body that formalised communications between Dublin and London.²⁵⁰ FitzGerald planned to publish the summaries of the Joint Studies a week after the meeting, so communications between the two bodies seemed likely to dramatically increase.²⁵¹ The AIIGC aimed to remedy the issues between Dublin, Belfast and London. The group advised that,

... the problem goes deeper and remedial measures would need to be far reaching, including consideration of the Constitutional claim and the "guarantee", Church/State relationships, institutional arrangements to reduce suspicion and distrust, and measures to make more effective the prosecution of offenders who seek to evade justice by crossing from one side of the border to the other.²⁵²

Before FitzGerald could start the Joint Studies, he faced a no confidence vote.

²⁴⁵ NAI, DFA 2011/127/1093, meeting between FitzGerald, O'Leary and MT, 9 Nov. 1981. London's record of the meeting is in TNA UK, PREM 19/509.

²⁴⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1089, *The Evening Herald*, 9 Nov. 1981, *The Sunday Times*, 9 Nov. 1981.

²⁴⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/509, NIO record of conversation, 27 Oct. 1981.

²⁴⁸ *The Irish Times*, 11 Nov. 1981 and BUFVCD, 'Thatcher in talks with Garret FitzGerald,' 7 Nov. 1981.

²⁴⁹ BUFVCD, 'Thatcher in talks with Garret FitzGerald,' 7 Nov. 1981.

²⁵⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1089, *The Irish Press*, 7 Nov. 1981, *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 Nov. 1981, *The Guardian*, 7 Nov. 1981, *The Irish Times*, *The Evening Herald*, 7 Nov. 1981 and Ricki Schoen, '1974- Present' in *Europe Since 1945: An Encyclopedia, Volume One*, ed., by Bernard A. Cook (New York: Garland, 2001), p. 639.

²⁵¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/509, Armstrong minute to MT, 2 Nov. 1981.

²⁵² NAI, TAOIS 2011/127/1087, summary of conclusions for the joint study on measures to encourage mutual understanding, Nov. 1981.

In January 1982, FitzGerald's government introduced a new budget. They had previously released a budget plan in July 1981 that was as austere as it was unpopular.²⁵³ The February 1982 budget did not fare better. The main gripe was with the tax on children's shoes. FitzGerald defended the tax by arguing that these could be purchased by women with small feet. Fine Gael lost the support of Jim Kemmy, an Independent TD, in the Dáil, and the government fell.²⁵⁴ An election was called the following month which Haughey won.²⁵⁵ The 'revolving door' of Irish politics continued to spin.²⁵⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the Hunger Strikes further tested the Anglo-Irish political arena. Some of the discoveries are surprising; Haughey was expected to support the protest but actually labelled them blackmailers; Thatcher adamantly denounced the Hunger Strike but was directly involved with secret negotiations with the PIRA; FitzGerald's administration actively sought a solution, one of which was 'Operation Santa Claus', and he felt like he could not fully trust Thatcher due to the secret negotiations. Examining each of these elements in turn is key to understanding how Dublin and London could be caught up in a crisis and work together and autonomously. This chapter has also shown how grass roots support in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland could be motivated to the extent that both Westminster and the Dáil were directly impacted. Sands became an MP, while Haughey's majority was challenged when Doherty and Agnew took two of Fianna Fáil's seats in the 1981 General Election. Although both Dublin and London had other policy matters to attend to during the 1980s, Northern Ireland continually demanded attention.

The 1980 Hunger Strike ultimately ended in failure for the protestors. London offered concessions on clothing and association, but the fundamental policy of political status remained. During a Cabinet meeting on 4 December, it was noted that 'The strike was getting

²⁵³ *The Irish Times*, 18 July 1981.

²⁵⁴ Stephen O'Byrnes, *Hiding Behind a Face: Fine Gael Under FitzGerald* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1986), p. 135.

²⁵⁵ Harris M. Lentz, *Heads of States and Governments: A Worldwide Encyclopedia of Over 2,300 Leaders, 1945 Through 1992* (Singapore: Toppan Company, 1996), p. 424.

²⁵⁶ FitzGerald used the phrase 'revolving door Taoiseach' to describe his victory over Haughey in 1981, his defeat in 1982, and his re-election in favour of Haughey in the latter half of 1982. It is the title of the thirteenth chapter in *All in a Life*.

less support from outside than the organisers had hoped. The level of public response had not increased and the size of marches had not grown.²⁵⁷ The PIRA prisoners felt that had been tricked by London. Thatcher's victory over the 1980 Hunger Strike was short-lived. Lessons were learnt that were applied to the second Hunger Strike in 1981.

The 1981 Hunger Strike caused a crisis in the Dáil and Westminster. Haughey urged Thatcher to come up with a solution without outlining what that solution should be. When FitzGerald entered the Taoiseach's office, he was determined to find a solution. He pinned his hopes on the ICJP report, and Thatcher permitted the group to go into the prison to study conditions. But both the ICJP and ICRC reports reiterated what Haughey had suggested: re-examine the concessions bar the demand for political status. In July, Thatcher communicated directly with the PIRA to find a solution. When London's proposals were rejected, it seemed there was nothing to do but sit back and wait.

The Hunger Strike also marked the beginning of a new PIRA tactic. Members could be elected to Westminster and the Dáil. Voters were given the opportunity to save Sands' life by voting for him, but they were voting for the PIRA. Support for the PIRA was strengthened by the Hunger Strike and '... the hunger strikes of the IRA prisoners can be seen as an instrument exerting political pressure that raised the whole Northern Ireland conflict to a completely different level.'²⁵⁸ The strikes also led to international condemnation of Thatcher's policy. Irish-American groups, including NORAID, worked to raise funds for the PIRA. In spite of this, Reagan refused to step in and make a statement on the strike. In the end, interception by the strikers' families ended the protest on 3 October 1981. Ten men had died on Hunger Strike. The landscape of Irish politics changed forever.

²⁵⁷ TNA UK, CAB 128/68, cabinet meeting, 4 Dec. 1980.

²⁵⁸ Marcel M. Baumann, 'Transforming Conflict Toward and Away from Violence: Bloody Sunday and the Hunger Strikes in Northern Ireland,' *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2009), pp. 172-180 and Jim Smyth, 'Unintentional Mobilization: The Effects of the 1980-1981 Hunger Strikes in Ireland,' *Political Communication and Persuasion*, vol. 4 (1987), pp. 179-190.

Chapter 3

***GUBU*¹: Irish Neutrality and the Falklands War, 1982**

That a common or garden dictator should rule over the Queen's subjects and prevail by fraud and violence? Not while I was Prime Minister.²

At 2am on 2 April 1982, the Royal Marines at Moody Brook Camp awoke and moved from their garrison in Port Stanley to their defence positions. The FCO had sent Rex Hunt, Governor of the Falklands, a telegram the previous day warning that an Argentine invasion was imminent. 80 marines were placed around the Island. At 4:30 am, the Argentines landed and headed straight for the Marines barracks. Using grenades and sub-machine guns they 'shot the place up' but, realising the Marines had anticipated their attack, moved off to Government House, the home of Hunt. If the Argentines wanted to take the Islands, Hunt had to surrender. The Marines defended Government House until Hunt asked them to stand down at 10:30am. The Argentine flag flew over the Falklands and the national anthem played on loop over the local radio station.³ How had this happened?

In 1981, Thatcher cut the defence budget in the South Atlantic. As a consequence, HMS *Endurance*, a patrol vessel, was decommissioned. This left the Falklands without a sea patrol. This decision 'demoralised the islanders and emboldened the Argentines.'⁴ Thatcher later defended this decision in the Commons. She told the House that Argentine interest in the Islands was historical, but the cost of defending the Islands and the resources involved would precipitate 'the very action it was intended to deter.'⁵ In Argentina, General Galtieri needed a morale boost. His popularity was low and anti-junta demonstrations, along with

¹ An acronym for the phrase 'grotesque ... unbelievable ... bizarre ... and unprecedented' attributed to Haughey by Connor Cruise O'Brien after the MacArthur murders. This incident will be discussed later in this chapter.

² Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 181.

³ Rex Hunt, *My Falkland Days* (London: Politicos, 2002), pp. 167-180, Marshall Cavendish, *The Falklands War, 25th Anniversary: A Day-By-Day Account from Invasion to Victory* (London: Marshall Cavendish, 2007), pp. 1-4, and John Smith, *74 Days: An Islander's Diary of the Falklands Occupation* (London: Century Publishing, 1984).

⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign, Volume 1: The Origins of the Falklands War* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 52.

⁵ 'Falkland Islands (Franks Report),' Commons sitting of 25 Jan. 1983, Hansard HC [769-878] cc. 789-870 and *The Financial Times*, 26 Jan. 1983.

protests over the 'Dirty War' in which thousands of people disappeared without a trace, threatened his position. To solve his problem, Galtieri invaded the Falklands.⁶ Thatcher described being told of the invasion as 'the worst moment of my life.'⁷ Trouble was brewing in Ireland too.

Anglo-Irish relations deteriorated rapidly during Haughey's nine-month term in 1982. His muddled attempt at foreign policy during the Falklands War deeply angered Thatcher. She later described his stance as 'thoroughly unhelpful ...'⁸ Although Haughey initially agreed to support EEC sanctions against Argentina, the publication of a new White Paper on Northern Ireland which set out a 'rolling devolution' policy left Haughey out in the cold. The Falklands presented Haughey with the opportunity to avenge his idea for an inter-parliamentary tier. When an Irish fishing vessel, the *Sharelga*, was sunk accidentally by a British submarine and an Argentine cruiser, the *Belgrano*, was sunk by a submarine with sanction from Thatcher, Britain proved that it had abandoned diplomacy in favour of military action. The final straw for Haughey came when Thatcher delayed a vote on EEC farm price increases. Haughey reinstated Irish neutrality. He claimed that this was a return to Ireland's traditional foreign policy, but anti-British statements by Síle de Valera and Neil Blaney proved otherwise. Was Haughey using Britain's difficulty as his opportunity to appeal to his Anglophobic support base? The relationship between Haughey and Thatcher became toxic. Thatcher described how 'Anglo-Irish relations cooled to freezing.'⁹ At home, Haughey's grip on the Taoiseach's Office started to slip. An over-ride button, the implication of the Irish Attorney General, Patrick Connolly, in the MacArthur murders, the Dowra affair, a car-crash and Liffeygate led to a low ebb in public confidence in Haughey.¹⁰ He left the Taoiseach's office in December 1982 under a cloud of suspicion and with Anglo-Irish relations in ruins. His second term was as dramatic as it was short.

⁶ Ownership of the Islands was the source of long-standing tension between Argentina and the UK. For more on the Dirty War see Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina* (London: Greenwood Publishing, 2002). To understand the background to the Falklands from the Argentine perspective, see Daniel K. Gibran, *The Falklands War: Britain Versus the Past in the South Atlantic* (London: McFarland, 1998).

⁷ Freedman, *Vol. One*, p. 179.

⁸ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 394.

⁹ Dwyer, *Haughey's Forty Years of Controversy*, p. 262 and Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 394.

¹⁰ Patrick Connolly, Irish Attorney General 1982.

This chapter will provide further analysis of the Haughey-Thatcher relationship. The Falklands War would have lasting consequences for the Anglo-Irish political arena. As hibernophobia became increasingly evident in the British press, Thatcher also began to understand why her advisors had warned her about Haughey. Further to this, there was evidence of corruption within Haughey's circle, the Garda and the justice system. The GUBU period is detailed in this work because it would have been closely watched by London. 1982 would prove to Thatcher that the Haughey government could not be depended on for support.

Haughey Returns to the Taoiseach's Office

Haughey was re-elected Taoiseach in March 1982.¹¹ In an address to the White House during the annual St. Patrick's Day visit, Haughey set the tone for his second administration,

[T]here's one thing we Irish have not yet achieved and which we are constantly reminded ... we are seeking to bring to an end the partition of ours. And the obstacles to that goal are in part the age-old ones which so nearly sundered the young United States - misunderstanding, ignorance, prejudice, suspicion and fear.¹²

The remark was tantamount to a red flag to London. The speech was 'unhelpful ... unwelcome ... and unexpected,' and a 'hangover from electioneering.'¹³ By this stage, it was common knowledge that the Haughey-Thatcher initiative was dead in the water, and London was unsure of how to proceed, 'there remains the question of what, if anything, you should say about these matters to Mr. Haughey, if you see him.'¹⁴ Nevertheless, the two governments agreed that Haughey and Thatcher should meet at the next EEC summit in March.¹⁵

It was a brief meeting of 20 minutes, intended as a casual reintroduction rather than an official discussion. Haughey's pre-meeting briefs reiterated the importance of telling Thatcher that a solution to Northern Ireland needed to include Dublin.¹⁶ The DFA in Dublin

¹¹ FitzGerald's coalition lost out to a surge in support for Fianna Fáil's economic and industrial policies. See FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 404.

¹² Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, pp. 606-608.

¹³ TNA UK, PREM 19/749, minute from John Holmes, 26 Mar. 1982 and TNA UK, PREM 19/815, Figg 76 to MT, 23 Mar. 1982.

¹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/749, minute from Armstrong to PM, 26 Mar. 1982.

¹⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/749, FCO letter to No. 10, 26 Mar. 1982, NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, steering note, 26 Mar. 1982.

¹⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, steering note, 26 Mar. 1982

knew London was about to introduce a new scheme for rolling devolution. They had been told by Prior himself, and the plans had been leaked to the Irish media.¹⁷ Haughey labelled rolling devolution as ‘unworkable’ as it was ‘an internal six-county’ idea that was contrary to the December 1980 *communiqué*.¹⁸ But, according to London’s record of the meeting, Haughey and Thatcher avoided talking about politics and instead focused on economics, the Pope’s visit to Britain and the Falkland Islands.¹⁹ The tone of the record suggests that Haughey attempted to extend an olive branch, but Thatcher gently pushed it away. Before the discussion concluded, Haughey asked if Thatcher could ‘tentatively (earmark)’ July for a follow up meeting. Thatcher’s response, ‘that time might be possible,’ is in stark contrast to her enthusiasm during Haughey’s first term.²⁰ Thatcher made it clear that it was up to Dublin to pursue London, but the publication of Prior’s plans, the White Paper, on 5 April, as well as the invasion of the Falklands, made a meeting impossible for the foreseeable future.²¹

Immediately after the White Paper was published, the Haughey Government released a strongly worded statement. ‘... the Government can only confirm their view as to the unworkable nature and the mistaken focus of the proposals.’²² Dublin also kept a close eye on reactions to the Prior initiative in Northern Ireland.²³ The Department of the Taoiseach held a Northern Ireland review meeting on 8 April where it was agreed that opposition to the White Paper should be expressed at every opportunity to London. Officials were told to press

¹⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, meeting between Haughey and MT, 29-30 Mar. 1982. Prior had told an unnamed Minister about his plan in January. That meeting can be found in NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1091. The *Irish Press* reported extensively on Prior’s idea from 23 Sept. 1981. By January 1982 the paper was guessing that Priors idea would be formally published within a few weeks. This information was based on meetings Prior was holding with the Northern Ireland parties. Other papers followed including *The Evening Herald* on 13 Oct. 1981, *The Irish Times* and *The Evening Herald*, 16 Dec. 1981,

¹⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, steering note, 26 Mar. 1982 and NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1100, Northern Ireland review meeting, 8 Apr. 1982. The 1980 *communiqué* had officiated Anglo-Irish relations. See chpt. 1.

¹⁹ London’s record of the meeting can be found at TNA UK, PREM 19/749. Although there are documents in the run-up to the meeting, as referenced above, there is no Dublin’s record of the 30 Mar. meeting.

²⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/749, No. 10 record of conversation, 30 Mar. 1982. From January, MT’s team had tried to set a date for the next Anglo-Irish bilateral but MT wanted to wait until Autumn. See TNA UK, PREM 19/1070.

²¹ The White Paper, officially ‘Northern Ireland: A framework for devolution’ is available at CAIN, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmsocmd8541.htm>.

²² Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, p. 613 and also NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1092.

²³ See NAI, DFA 2012/59/1580, conversation with General Secretary (UUP), Norman Hutton, 23 Apr. 1982, NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1092, report on the unionist reaction to the Prior initiative, 24 Apr. 1982, report from Mansergh on reactions to the Prior initiative in the Commons, 12 May 1982.

for an Irish dimension.²⁴ When Dermot Nally, David Neligan and Seán Donlon, Secretary General of the DFA and head of the Irish Diplomatic Service, met with Leonard Figg, British Ambassador to Ireland, and Philip Woodfield, Permanent Secretary of the NIO, to discuss Northern Ireland, Donlon asked if July would suit Thatcher for a meeting with Haughey.²⁵ Thatcher's team did not give a concrete reply. Events in the South Atlantic overshadowed Anglo-Irish relations for the time being.²⁶

The Republic of Ireland During the Falklands War

On 5 April David Tatham, from the British Embassy, met with Pádraig MacKernan, assistant secretary and political director of the DFA.²⁷ Tatham had been sent by the British Embassy to ask Ireland for support at the United Nations (UN) Security Council. The day after the invasion, the UN had tabled resolution 502 calling for an immediate end to hostilities and for Argentina to withdraw from the Falklands.²⁸ Tatham then detailed four suggestions for Ireland to consider,

- (1) condemning the attack to the Argentine Ambassador
- (2) recalling the Irish Ambassador, Patrick Walsh, from Argentina
- (3) imposing an arms embargo on Argentina
- (4) a suspension for export credit guarantees for trade with Argentina.²⁹

These were serious moves. To recall the Irish Ambassador would signal Ireland's disapproval of the invasion. MacKernan reiterated Ireland's resolve to support a peaceful resolution, but did not commit to any of the four points.³⁰ The following day the DFA circulated a report on the implications of the four suggestions. The report acknowledged that Dublin's decision would have lasting consequences on Anglo-Irish relations. Either they supported Britain,

²⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1100, Northern Ireland review meeting, 8 Apr. 1982. Present at that meeting were Haughey, Seán Doherty, Minister for Justice, Patrick Connolly, Attorney General and unnamed officials from the Departments of the Taoiseach, DFA, Justice and the Office of the Attorney General.

²⁵ Seán Donlon, Irish diplomat. Irish Ambassador to the United States 1978-1981, Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Head of the Irish Diplomatic Service, 1981-1987. Pivotal in setting up of Friends of Ireland to rival support for more controversial NORAD. Part of the Irish negotiating team for the AIA. Sir Philip Woodfield, British civil servant. Permanent Under-Secretary of State of the NIO 1981-1983.

²⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, meeting between Figg and Woodfield, 22 Apr. 1982.

²⁷ David Tatham, British diplomat. Counsellor, Embassy, Ireland 1981-1984. Pádraig MacKernan, Irish diplomat. Assistant Secretary and political director of the DFA 1980-1985.

²⁸ Resolution 502 can be found at <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/502>.

²⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/866, meeting with Tatham, 5 Apr. 1982.

³⁰ *i*Ibid.,

which would ‘... build up credit which could be turned to political and economic advantage ...’ or they could refuse support, which would result in ‘... British ill-will and ... a negative impact both on our bilateral relations generally and on British willingness to move forward on the economic and political questions ...’³¹ What was holding Dublin back then? The report alluded to Ireland’s policy of neutrality.³² An arms embargo could signal further disapproval with the invasion. Apart from this, Irish exports to Argentina would be impacted by the sanctions. On balance the report recommended,

... there is more to be gained, despite the risks and despite our attitudes on the merits of the case and the rash judgement which has brought the UK into its present predicament from a display of political good-will combined with cautious cooperation in the economic field, than from appearing to be negative or unduly dilatory.³³

Further to this, a brief on the Irish community in Argentina concluded that the Argentine-Irish were ‘Argentine first, Irish second.’ They were so few in number that their disapproval with Irish support for sanctions would have a minimal impact.³⁴ Dublin needed to make a decision. On 10 April, Gerard Collins, Haughey’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, released a statement affirming the Government’s decision to back resolution 502.³⁵ Tatham reassured MacKernan that as it would take the task force three weeks to arrive at the Islands, Thatcher would focus on a diplomatic solution to the conflict.³⁶ But events close to home proved otherwise.

Two weeks after the invasion, an accident occurred in South-West Ireland. On 18 April a fishing vessel called *Sharelga* sank after being dragged backwards at speed for two-

³¹ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/866, British request for support in applying sanctions against Argentina, 6 Apr. 1982.

³² Ireland had adopted neutrality in the 1930s. For more on the history of Irish neutrality see Trevor C. Salmon, ‘Neutrality and the Irish republic: Myth or reality?’ *The Round Table*, vol. 73, no. 290 (1984), pp. 205-215, Raymond J. Raymond, ‘Irish Neutrality and Anglo-Irish Relations: 1921-1941,’ *The International History Review*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1987), pp. 456-464, Eunan O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland: Intelligence and Irish Neutrality During the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³³ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/866, British request for support in applying sanctions against Argentina, 6 Apr. 1982.

³⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/866, The Irish-Argentine Community and the Falklands Crisis, 7 Apr. 1982.

³⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/867, statement by Collins, 10 Apr. 1982. Resolution 502 called for Argentina to withdraw from the Falklands and for Argentina and the UK to come to a peaceful settlement. Gerard ‘Gerry’ Collins, Fianna Fáil TD 1967-1997, Minister for Justice 1977-1981, 1987-1989, Minister for Foreign Affairs 1982, 1989-1992.

³⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/866, meeting with Tatham, 5 Apr. 1982. The Task Force, made up of HMS *Hermes*, *Invincible* and *Fearless*, needed at least three days-notice before setting sail and would then be at sea for three weeks.

and a-half-miles. None of the crew were injured but the owner, Raymond McEvoy, demanded an explanation from the Irish Government. McEvoy told reporters, ‘It must have been a sub. It wasn’t jaws or the 1.30pm bus.’³⁷ *The Guardian* even guessed that the trawler’s nets had become entangled with a British submarine.³⁸ At first London denied any involvement, but Figg was later sent to apologise for the incident,

He said that it was “some time” before the Commander of the submarine realised that he had been involved in an incident and that it took ‘some time’ to establish with a reasonable degree of certainty that the British authorities were liable. I pressed him to give additional details, particularly about the length of the period between the incident and the Commanders realisation that there had been an incident [*sic*]. He said that he had no further information.³⁹

The British Ministry of Defence (MOD) requested that McEvoy send a claim for damages which would be given ‘prompt attention.’⁴⁰ However, the political damage had been done.

Dublin demanded further explanation for the incident. It concluded that it would not become involved in the monetary claim from McEvoy, but requested intelligence on the incident from London.⁴¹ To cover their tracks, it was advised that ‘Such an approach could be made in the context of the anxiety on the part of the fishermen.’⁴² *The Irish Independent* was more forthright and demanded an answer to three questions,

- An explanation for the delay in admitting responsibility by the British.
- To hear why no apparent effort was made by the submarine to ensure there had been no loss of life after the sinking.
- To find out if steps were taken to make sure no such incident could occur again.⁴³

³⁷ *The Evening Herald*, 5 Sept. 2012.

³⁸ NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904, *The Guardian*, 3 May 1982.

³⁹ NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904, note from Seán to Dermot, 1 May 1982.

⁴⁰ NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904, note for Minister’s information, undated.

⁴¹ In 1983 it was reported that the crew were still awaiting compensation. The Irish Government agreed to make further enquiries as a complete breakdown in negotiations between the fishermen and the MOD could have serious political repercussions. No record of a final settlement figure is present within the DFA files, although recent newspaper articles reveal that an interim payment was made in 1984 before a final instalment in 1988. See NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904.

⁴² NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904, memo from King to Hennessy, 8 June 1982.

⁴³ NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904, *The Irish Times*, *The Evening Herald*, 3 May 1982, *The Guardian*, 3 May 1982, *The Irish Press*, 29 Apr. 1982.

Little mention of the incident is present in the PREM files aside from a despatch note by Figg. He surmised that the impact of the accident should not be overlooked, 'The news (of the sinking of the *Sharelga* on 18 April) provoked a wave of horror and revulsion, and because a British submarine was involved the event was linked in the public mind with the sinking of the *Belgrano*.' Figg also reported that '(Gerard) Collins told me that he felt he should not be seen to be shaking my hand in public.'⁴⁴ Declan O'Donovan, a DFA official, reflected '... contacts with the British Embassy here have not produced much realisation on their part of the implications of the stalemate in this case for Anglo-Irish relations ... The *Sharelga* case requires greater political attention on the British side.'⁴⁵ Negotiations between McEvoy's solicitors and the MOD dragged on and Irish papers kept a close eye on proceedings.⁴⁶ The presence of a nuclear submarine in Irish waters confirmed that Britain was prepared for conflict. London's secrecy over the incident increased distrust in Dublin and made it difficult for Haughey to be seen to support Thatcher.

Following the invasion of the Falklands, Thatcher had issued a plea for support of EEC sanctions against Argentina. The sanctions were intended to further damage Argentina's fragile economy and to pressurise her into retreat.⁴⁷ Thatcher invited Haughey to join the international community in bringing about a swift and peaceful end to the invasion.⁴⁸ She saw the invasion as a great injustice to the British citizens on the Islands and assumed others would feel the same.⁴⁹ Haughey initially agreed to 'support Community action and demonstrate ... solidarity.'⁵⁰ In doing so, Thatcher could welcome Haughey and Ireland to the 'right' side of the conflict. Six days after Haughey sent Thatcher that message, Dermot Nally told an Official from the British Embassy that Ireland was unsure about the effectiveness of sanctions, and that Dublin would like to see 'some reciprocity on the question

⁴⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/815, dispatch from Figg, 22 June 1982.

⁴⁵ NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904, letter from O'Donovan to Lillis, 24 Jan. 1984. Declan O'Donovan, Irish diplomat. Official at the Anglo-Irish section of the DFA.

⁴⁶ NAI, DFA 2014/32/1904, *The Evening Herald*, 7 Feb. 1984.

⁴⁷ Please refer to Lisa L. Martin, 'Institutions and Co-Operation: sanctions during the Falkland Islands Conflict,' *International Security*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1992), pp. 143-178 for more on the EEC sanctions against Argentina.

⁴⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/615, message from MT to world leaders, 6 Apr. 1982 and NAI, TAOIS 2013/27/14, message from MT to Haughey, undated.

⁴⁹ See Stephen Benedict Dyson, 'Cognitive Style and Foreign Policy: Margaret Thatcher's Black and White Thinking,' *International Political Science Review*, vol. 30, no. 1 (2009), pp. 33-48 for more on MT's cognitive outlook and its effect on the Falklands.

⁵⁰ CAC, THCR 3/1/20, message from Haughey to MT, 16 Apr. 1982.

of agricultural prices which were a matter of extreme concern to us particularly at this time of the year.’⁵¹

The EEC had been due to vote on a budgetary increase of 10.5% for farmers, but due to the Falklands crisis, the vote was delayed. This impacted Haughey’s main electoral support group, Irish dairy farmers, who could potentially lose £250,000 per day until the increase was agreed.⁵² The Irish Economic Division surmised that although no other member state had linked the Falklands with the price debate, ‘the possibility exists that progress on either issue will affect the outcome of the other.’ The Division also warned that wavering on solidarity with sanctions could make Thatcher ‘more intransigent and less likely to accept a compromise on the Budget.’⁵³ Thatcher vetoed the vote using the Luxembourg compromise at the end of April.⁵⁴ This was strike one for Haughey. Strike two quickly followed.

On 2 May, the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano* was sunk by the Royal Navy. News of the attack on the Argentine fleet was critically received in Ireland.⁵⁵ *Belgrano* was sailing away from the exclusion zone when it was torpedoed. It looked as though the Navy had launched an unprovoked attack against the ship and its crew. In her autobiography, Thatcher outlined the danger of allowing the *Belgrano* to continue sailing along the exclusion zone,

The *Belgrano* was escorted by two destroyers. The cruiser itself had substantial fire power provided by 6 inch guns with a range of 13 miles and anti-aircraft missiles. We were advised that she might have been fitted with Exocet anti-ship missiles, and her two destroyer escorts were known to be carrying them. The whole group was sailing on the edge of the Exclusion Zone. We had received intelligence about the aggressive intentions of the Argentine fleet.⁵⁶

⁵¹ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, summary of meeting with Figg and Woodfield, 22 Apr. 1982.

⁵² *The Irish Times*, 3 Apr. 1982.

⁵³ NAI, DFA 2012/25/87, letter from Economic Division, renewal of sanctions on trade with Argentina, 13 May 1982.

⁵⁴ Arthur, *Special Relationships*, p. 211 and NAI, DFA 2012/25/87, press summary, 30 Apr. 1982. The Luxembourg compromise was essentially a gentleman’s agreement between the member states of the EEC that any vote could be delayed when it affected a country’s interests. See Anthony L. Teasdale, ‘The Life and Death of the Luxembourg Compromise,’ *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4 (1993), pp. 567-579. Thatcher explains the problems with EEC farm price increases for the UK in *Downing Street Years*.

⁵⁵ *Irish Independent*, *The Irish Press* and *The Irish Examiner*, 4 May 1982, *The Irish Press*, 5 May 1982. These papers all reported on the loss of the sailors on board the *Belgrano*.

⁵⁶ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 214. This report has been confirmed and clarified by several contemporaries. The Argentine’s claimed *Belgrano* was heading back to port, but other evidence suggests she was part of a pincer movement and would have attacked the British fleet. See Major David Thorp, *The Silent Listener: British Electronic Surveillance, Falklands 1982* (Gloucestershire, Spellmount, 2014), Admiral Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the*

Although *Belgrano* was sailing away, the cruiser could still turn around and launch an attack. This was lost on Paddy Power, the Irish Minister for Defence.⁵⁷ He told a Fianna Fáil meeting that following the sinking of the *Belgrano*, he believed ‘Britain themselves (were) very much the aggressors.’ He added that ‘the withdrawal of British forces “from this little island of ours” will bring peace.’⁵⁸ At a time of intense diplomatic tension, Powers statement added to the sour atmosphere.⁵⁹ Worse still he made the statement the same day HMS *Sheffield* was sunk by Argentina. Thatcher reportedly, ‘took this act of aggression “very hard”, and sat alone in her Commons room in tears.’⁶⁰ At first Haughey was against Powers comment and demanded a retraction and an apology. Powers statement had serious repercussions for the Anglo-Irish bilateral. Media outlets suggested that Dublin’s official line was that the British were the aggressors.⁶¹ But Power refused to apologise and Haughey did not to seek his resignation. Power was not the only Fianna Fáil member to criticise the Falklands War.

Blaney had been against Ireland’s involvement in sanctions from the beginning and deemed it a move in favour of colonial Britain that had damaged essential Irish trade with Argentina.⁶² Síle de Valera argued that Ireland’s traditional stance of neutrality should have been of primary importance from the very beginning.⁶³ Two challenges from within his own party meant that Haughey had to act quickly to preserve his majority.⁶⁴ Two days after *Belgrano* sank, Dublin released a statement that called for an end to the sanctions against Argentina.⁶⁵ Haughey told Figg that Power’s comments ‘had been made off the cuff, as a sort of an emotional reaction by the Minister who perhaps had associated the sinking of the

Falklands Battle Group Commander (London: HarperCollins, 2012) and Martin Middlebrook, *The Argentine Fight for the Falklands* (Yorkshire, Pen and Sword, 2003). Speaking to *Portsmouth News* on 2 Apr. 2012, Sir Tim McClement also confirmed this theory.

⁵⁷ Paddy Power, Fianna Fáil TD 1969-1989. Minister for Defence and Minister for Trade, Commerce and Tourism 1982.

⁵⁸ *The Irish Times*, 4 May 1982.

⁵⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/624, UKE Dublin to FCO, 4 May 1982.

⁶⁰ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. One*, p. 716 and Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, p. 265.

⁶¹ NAI, DFA 2012/25/87, press office 3 to head of mission, 6 May 1982.

⁶² Dwyer, *Haughey’s Forty Years*, p. 267 and *The Evening Herald*, 9 Nov. 1985.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 267. Later in July, Gerry Collins, Haughey’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, attacked the level of commitment shown by the British Government towards the burgeoning Anglo-Irish initiative. See TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, UKE Dublin 197 to FCO, 16 July 1982.

⁶⁴ Haughey told MT in Brussels that ‘governments rarely lasted long.’ TNA UK, PREM 19/749, No. 10 recorded conversation, 30 Mar. 1982.

⁶⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/868, official Government statement, 4 May 1982 and DFA 2013/27/14, government statement, 4 May 1982. See also Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, pp. 629-634.

Argentinian warship with the recent sinking of an Irish fishing vessel by a British submarine.⁶⁶ Haughey then wrote to Thatcher to clarify his position,

You are, I know, already aware of my Government's attitude to the use of force by Argentina, in defiance of the Security Council. We have made our views clear both in the Security Council and in our support for the Joint Statements by the Ten on this issue ... At the same time, however, we have always been doubtful about the effectiveness of economic sanctions, particularly in circumstances where they cannot be universally applied.⁶⁷

News of Dublin's change in stance left Thatcher 'in a mood of fury.'⁶⁸ In her autobiography, she wrote that 'the diplomatic scene was ... becoming more difficult and complicated.'⁶⁹ Figg told Haughey that he was 'dismayed' by the Irish Government's *volte face*. Given their attempts to work together, Figg expected some consultation before Dublin made a public announcement. Figg warned that the repercussions would be serious for the war, '(sending) precisely the wrong political signal to Argentina at a most crucial time.'⁷⁰ The Irish Ambassador to the United Nations, Noel Dorr, emphasised that the decision was based on the implementation of military measures.⁷¹ Britain's military action had led the public in Ireland to '... perceive the sanctions as an extension of military action rather than political/diplomatic action.'⁷²

Although Haughey emphasised that neutrality was the basis of his decision, the Irish media speculated that this was not the case.⁷³ During a radio interview, RTÉ broadcaster Shane Kenny put it to Haughey that 'Ireland's neutrality is ... simply ... anti-British.' Haughey retorted that any anti-British feeling was being matched, even surpassed, by 'latent anti-Irish feeling ... which surfaces on occasions like this.' In effect, his decision had not brought about Anglo-Irish tensions, it had simply boiled over due to the circumstances.

⁶⁶ NAI, DFA2012/59/1688, meeting between Haughey and Figg, 6 May 1982.

⁶⁷ CAC, THCR 3/1/20, Haughey message to MT, 16 Apr. 1982.

⁶⁸ NAI, DFA 2013/27/14, Kennedy 163 to government, 17 May 1982, Norman MacQueen, 'The Expedience of Tradition: Ireland, International Organization and the Falklands Crisis,' *Political Studies* (1985), pp. 38-55.

⁶⁹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 216.

⁷⁰ NAI, DFA 2012/25/87, message conveyed orally by British Ambassador to Haughey, 6 May 1982.

⁷¹ Noel Dorr, Irish representative to the United Nations Security Council 1981, Irish Ambassador to the United Kingdom 1983-1987, Secretary-General of the Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1987-1995.

⁷² NAI, DFA 2012/25/87, Dorr to MacKernan, 5 May 1982.

⁷³ NAI, DFA 2013/27/14, statement by Haughey to Dáil Éireann on the Falklands Crisis, 11 May 1982.

Haughey also said that Ireland could no longer support sanctions once military measures had been taken, ‘in the South Atlantic there is what amounts to a state of open war and in that situation we must be very careful to preserve our neutral position.’⁷⁴

Ill-feeling in Britain was monitored closely by the Irish Press Office. They found that although interest in Irish holidays actually increased during the crisis, other areas suffered.⁷⁵ Aer Lingus reported that revenue from Britain was down 6-7 per cent, and that advance bookings were poor.⁷⁶ Concerns were raised at the potential loss of exports to both Argentina and Britain.⁷⁷ *The Sun* launched a campaign urging its readers to stop buying Irish butter, ‘Remember: don’t buy Irish butter. Let them try selling it to their new friends in Argentina. **Maybe they can make out-of-work Galtieri their chief salesman!**’⁷⁸ Adams Food Ltd., an Irish butter and cheese manufacturer, reported that sales representatives in North England and Scotland were having a particularly difficult time. They were ‘... operating in a very disagreeable atmosphere.’⁷⁹ In addition to the hostility towards Irish business in Britain, Haughey’s Government came under fire from the Commons.

During FCO question time on 5 May, Peter Emery, MP for East Devon, described neutrality as a ‘stab in the back’ while Jim Spicer, MP for West Dorset and MEP for Wessex, spoke of ‘the “disgraceful way” in which the Irish Government had broken ranks with Britain’s partners in the EEC.’ Douglas Hurd concluded that Ireland’s decision was a ‘mistake’ and would ‘be a hindrance to getting a peaceful settlement to what both we and the Irish Government want.’⁸⁰ Thatcher had to defend the Anglo-Irish initiative as back-bench colleagues asked ‘for a “freeze” in diplomatic relations ...’⁸¹ In spite of this, private meetings between Ministers in London and Dublin initially increased in May.⁸²

⁷⁴ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, Haughey interviewed for ‘This Week,’ RTÉ Radio, 23 May 1982. Also in NAI, DFA 2013/27/14.

⁷⁵ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, *The Sunday Press*, 27 June 1982.

⁷⁶ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, London liaison committee, 11 June 1982.

⁷⁷ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, *The Irish Press*, 18 June 1982, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 June 1982.

⁷⁸ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, *The Sun*, 25 June 1982. Sentence appears in italics and bold in original article.

⁷⁹ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, minute from Foster to Kennedy, 28 May 1982.

⁸⁰ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, Dempsey 441 to Political Division, 5 May 1982. In his report, Dempsey mistook Emery for Julian Amery, MP for Brighton Pavilion. The comments can be found within Commons sitting of 5 May 1982, Hansard HC [135-264].

⁸¹ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, *The Financial Times*, 25 May 1982.

⁸² Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, p. 628. Notes of these meetings are held within NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/827, NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1070.

The importance of Anglo-Irish relations was brought home by the Hyde and Regent's Park PIRA bombs in London in July in which 11 soldiers were killed.⁸³ Thatcher later wrote that 'the carnage was truly terrible' and visited the surviving soldiers the next day in hospital.⁸⁴ The day after the bomb Thatcher also received a note from Ian Gow about a speech that Collins had made in the Dáil on 15 July.⁸⁵ Gow, ever keen to push the unionist cause over wider Anglo-Irish relations, timed the note deliberately. Elements of Collins speech had been sent to Thatcher before, but after the bombs parts of it were troubling.⁸⁶ Collins had indicated that security co-operation was conditional and that Dublin had the support of their 'European partners' for a joint Anglo-Irish approach to Northern Ireland.⁸⁷ The Irish media sensationalised the speech. *The Irish Press* interpreted Collins as meaning that ... the political development of the North is not our business then the security of the North is not our business either.⁸⁸ *The Irish Independent* led with Collins 'Blistering Attack on Britain' while *The Irish Times* hinted at a growing 'Anglo-Irish rift'.⁸⁹ Following the reaction to Collin's speech, Figg was called to Neligan's office. Collins did not send an apology but said he was concerned that his speech had been misinterpreted by the media. He added that Collin's was 'particularly upset' given his previous role as Minister of Justice and that 'He wanted Mr. Prior to know that he should have no worries (about security)'.⁹⁰ The message was passed on and the matter, seemingly, dropped. The *faux pas* was made during the worst period for Anglo-Irish relations since the Thatcher-Haughey fall out of 1980. But the British media continued to examine the impact Haughey had had on the Falklands War.

The Daily Telegraph surmised that Haughey's attitude was 'calculated to endear the Irish Government to people in Britain already disenchanted with its stand in refusing to back

⁸³ McKittrick, *Lost Lives*, pp. 908-909.

⁸⁴ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 394.

⁸⁵ Collins speech can be found here- 'Adjournment of Dáil: Motion,' Dáil Éireann debate vol. 337 no. 11, 15 July 1982.

⁸⁶ Figg sent MT highlights of Collin's speech via telegram. Her signature is at the top of the document. TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Figg 197 to Deskby, 16 July 1982.

⁸⁷ CAC, THCR 2/6/2/117, note from Gow to MT, 21 Jan. 1982 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Figg 216 to FCO, 23 July 1982.

⁸⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Figg 198 to FCO, 16 July 1982. MT underlined the sentences to indicate that she agreed with their sentiment.

⁸⁹ *The Evening Herald* and *The Irish Times*, 16 July 1982. Figg sent these headlines via telegram to the FCO, TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Figg 216 to FCO, 23 July 1982.

⁹⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Figg 208 to FCO, 23 July 1982.

Britain over the Falklands.’ The Tory *The Daily Mail* published that ‘The Government of the Republic is temperamentally and traditionally inclined to make trouble for Britain in any international dispute in which we are involved.’ *The Daily Express* ran a headline story on ‘Hostile Haughey.’⁹¹ The Irish Press Office reported that Haughey’s Government had caused more upset than the assassination of Mountbatten in 1979, ‘... We have had more letters and more phone calls, almost all of which are against the Government’s policy ... the attitudes and actions of the Irish Government are being directly labelled as being anti-British.’⁹² The DFA in Dublin forwarded a list of common questions they were receiving from the Irish public,

- (1) Argentina is the aggressor, not Britain. Why is Ireland allowing itself to be seen to be siding with an aggressor?
- (2) Argentina is a dictatorship, with a very poor recent record on human rights. Are we now siding with a dictatorship against a democracy? Comparisons are made here with World War 2.
- (3) Our stand on the Falklands shows up what we are really like. Contrary to recent developments Ireland is not really interested in better Anglo-Irish relations. In Britain’s hour of need we are seen to be wanting. Some of the comments made claim we are pro-IRA.
- (4) A number have told us that they are cancelling holidays in Ireland.
- (5) Those with business contacts with Ireland have indicated that they would wish to reduce such contacts to a minimum both in terms of purchasing Irish goods and in terms of employing Irish people.⁹³

Haughey telephoned Thatcher in May to offer his “deepest sympathy” along with the promise of trying ‘to be helpful.’⁹⁴ But Thatcher and her Government’s tolerance level had been pushed to capacity. Figg was due to meet Haughey at the end of May and was advised to ‘leave (him) in no doubt that we regard Anglo-Irish relations as having taken a considerable turn for the worse.’⁹⁵ During that meeting, Haughey laid the blame squarely at London because of their failure to consult him before the White Paper. He went on to explain that his

⁹¹ *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 July 1982, *The Daily Mail*, 25 May 1982, *The Daily Express*, 25 May 1982. Cut outs of these articles were kept by the DFA 2012/59/1688.

⁹² NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, Kennedy 138 to Neligan, 26 May 1982.

⁹³ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, O’Ceallaigh 174 to Whelan, 20 May 1982.

⁹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/628, No. 10 record of telephone conversation, 17 May 1982.

⁹⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, FCO 74 to UKE Dublin, 25 May 1982.

actions were calculated ‘to prevent a more unwelcome Panamanian resolution’ as well as a reflection of Ireland’s traditional state of neutrality.⁹⁶ He added that Anglo-Irish relations were ‘often taking considerable turns for the worse.’ Figg concluded that it would take time to restore Anglo-Irish relations at an elite level.⁹⁷ Other British diplomats reported their disappointment.

During a lunch held in his honour, Francis Pym spoke to US Senator, Ted Kennedy, about his and Thatcher’s anger with Ireland’s decision, and how ‘relations (were) “getting worse every day”’.⁹⁸ As an avid supporter of the peace process in Ireland, this would have concerned Kennedy. Eamonn Kennedy, the Irish Ambassador, said that Thatcher’s tone had become ‘... more bellicose ...’⁹⁹ Later in May, Daithi O Ceallaigh, an official at the Irish Embassy in London, met Grey Ruthven, Minister of State for Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁰ Gowrie said that Thatcher was ‘furious’ and that ‘if the Anglo-Irish relationship is to mean anything it should mean that in matters of mutual interest one side is aware beforehand of what the other is doing.’¹⁰¹ Alan Goodison of the FCO surmised,¹⁰²

... in the view of the UK Government, Ireland was taking a most unhelpful line at the United Nations. The Irish draft resolution was totally unacceptable to the UK. It was naive [*sic*] to think that the UK ... would now agree to halt its military activity before Argentina agreed to withdraw its forces from the islands. There was a lack of clear thinking in the Irish attitude ... The UK Government considered the Irish activity at the UN unhelpful and damaging to the UK.¹⁰³

The FCO compiled a report on the current state of Anglo-Irish relations.

⁹⁶ Haughey was referring to the extensive ceasefire resolution tabled by Panama and Spain. The resolution was introduced on 5 June but was vetoed by Britain. Panama supported the Argentine claim to the Falklands. See TNA UK, PREM 19/649.

⁹⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, UKE Dublin 164 to FCO, 26 May 1982.

⁹⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, Kennedy 185 to Anglo-Irish Political and Economic Divisions, 3 June 1982. Francis Pym, Baron Pym, Conservative MP 1961-1987. Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1974, Secretary of State for Defence 1979-1981, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs 1982-1983.

⁹⁹ NAI, DFA 2012/25/87, Kennedy 333 to MacKernan, 15 May 1982. Eamonn Kennedy, Irish diplomat. Irish Ambassador to Britain, 1978-1983.

¹⁰⁰ Grey Ruthven, 2nd Earl of Gowrie, Conservative. Minister of State for Employment between 1979 and 1981, and as Minister of State for Northern Ireland between 1981 and 1983 at the Northern Ireland Office. Ruthven was born in Dublin.

¹⁰¹ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, letter from O Ceallaigh to Hennessy, 18 May 1982.

¹⁰² Sir Alan Goodison, British diplomat. Ambassador to Ireland 1983-1986.

¹⁰³ NAI, DFA 2013/27/14, meeting with Goodison, Under Secretary at the FCO, 26 May 1982.

The report analysed the reasons behind Dublin's u-turn decision. Irish nationalists sympathised with Argentina as a 'fellow victim' of colonialism, so Haughey's grass-root support base must have had some influence over his policy shift. True, some Irish newspapers referred to the Islands as the 'Malvinas' in solidarity with the junta, and Power had alluded to the similarities with Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁴ The report made three concluding remarks,

- 1) The impact of the Irish Government's behaviour on Anglo-Irish relations may well be long lasting ... the Falklands issue touched on raw nerves in Ireland and reminded us yet again of the virulence in some quarters of anti-British feeling and of the tendency of Irish politicians ... to be unwilling to speak out against it.
- 2) Irish memories of the Falklands crisis will probably have less long term impact than perceptions in Britain.
- 3) Irish behaviour over the Falklands has gratuitously damaged our relations and British attitudes towards the Republic are likely to remain suspicious for some time. But we still need to co-operate closely with our nearest neighbour, just as they need to do so with us.¹⁰⁵

Thatcher faced the prospect of meeting Haughey at the June EEC. She was not ready to forgive Haughey and '... she minded very much indeed that the Irish had tried to impede British victory in the Falklands.'¹⁰⁶ During Prime Minister's question time in the Commons in May, she expressed her 'disappointment' at the Irish Government's attitude to EEC sanctions.¹⁰⁷ Then, in June, she stated that she was 'very concerned' about some of the proposals put forward by the Irish Government in the course of the crisis.¹⁰⁸ Sections of the British press blamed Haughey for setting relations back by ten years and de-railing the peace process.¹⁰⁹ Evaluations of the current mood in London differed.

¹⁰⁴ *The Irish Times*, 4 May 1982. The *Irish Press* used Malvinas, although as a Fianna Fáil paper this is hardly surprising. Some local papers, including the *Meath Chronicle* and the *Fermanagh Herald* also used the term. *The Evening Herald*, a populist paper, started to call the Falklands the Malvinas after the *Sharelga* incident.

¹⁰⁵ CAC, THCR 1/20/3/19, UKE Dublin to FCO, diplomatic report no. 165/82, 22 June 1982.

¹⁰⁶ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. One*, p. 621.

¹⁰⁷ 'Republic of Ireland (talks),' Written answers (Commons) of 24 May 1982, Hansard HC [217-260] cc. 223. Her speech was recorded in NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688.

¹⁰⁸ 'Economic Summit (Versailles),' Commons Sitting of 8 June 1982, Hansard HC [1-188] cc. 22-31. This speech was also recorded in NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688.

¹⁰⁹ *Business Week*, 12 July 1982, *The Times*, 29 July 1982.

Whereas Cabinet member, Cecil Parkinson, Conservative MP, and T.E. Utley warned that Anglo-Irish relations would soon recover without any lasting damage, the overwhelming opinion was the opposite.¹¹⁰ Utley later penned an article for *The Daily Telegraph*, explaining that the Falklands ‘were sure to kill any Dublin *entente*.’¹¹¹ Thatcher was particularly disappointed as she felt that she and Haughey had reached an understanding of their “unique relationship”. Pym warned Kennedy that Thatcher might not meet with Haughey again.¹¹² Edward Oakden of the FCO confirmed that such was Thatcher’s current mood that ‘the Falklands Issue has ended any possibility of the Prime Minister meeting the Taoiseach in the near future and (Oakden) personally doubted if there would be a meeting this year.’¹¹³ He had heard that Thatcher was angry and disappointed, and warned Dublin that ‘relations have suffered severely.’ He explained that part of Thatcher’s disappointment stemmed from her uncertainty on the Irish issue. She had relied heavily on Neave to form her policy. After he died it was revealed that she had ‘very little direct knowledge of Anglo-Irish relations.’ She had trusted Haughey and, in spite of the unionist backlash, she had believed in the steps they were taking. The Falklands had shattered her belief in that relationship. It was confirmed to her that ‘the Irish Government has no real interest in developing a framework of co-operation for the sake of good bilateral relations but views these relations only through the prism of events in the North.’¹¹⁴ After attending the Trooping of the Colours ceremony, Kennedy sent a report of his brief conversation with Thatcher to the DFA. She was evidently fond of Kennedy. She told him that he and his family would ‘always be welcome.’ Just before he left the ceremony, Kennedy had another brief chat with Thatcher,

She then said that these were not the easiest times for Anglo-Irish relations and I recalled her remarkable phrase before entering No. 10 in May 1979 when she said “where there is discord may we bring harmony”. “Yes”, she said, with some vehemence, “but it takes two to do it! I cannot do it on my own” and turned away to say farewell to other departing guests.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Utley thought relations would ‘rapidly’ recover, and Parkinson admitted that although memories of the sanctions incident “would take a long time to fade”, there would be no “serious long-term effects on Anglo-Irish relations”. NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, meeting with Mr. T.E. Utley, 1 June 1982 and *The Sunday Tribune*, 9 July 1982. Cecil Parkinson, Baron Parkinson, MP Conservative 1970-1992. Chairman of the British Conservative Association, 1981-1983, 1997-1998.

¹¹¹ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 June 1982.

¹¹² NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, Kennedy 185 to Anglo-Irish, political and economic divisions, 3 June 1982.

¹¹³ Edward Oakden, British diplomat. Desk Officer for the ROI department at the FCO.

¹¹⁴ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, note, 24 May 1982.

¹¹⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1055, Trooping the Colour, 14 June 1982.

Thatcher felt let down by Haughey. Various newspapers reported that at the EEC summit in June 1982, she did not meet with him. Her engagement diary shows that she did not have a one-on-one meeting with anyone at the EEC but the media made the most of Thatcher's apparent snub, with headlines including 'buzz off, T tells Haughey.'¹¹⁶ Ireland's actions during the Falklands War were difficult for the British public to forget. The war had, to some extent, been glorified by the British media who wanted to cultivate a sense of patriotism. 'Whatever its intrinsic flaws, the government's position remained close to the mood of the country.'¹¹⁷ The Argentines invaded a British island where the majority of inhabitants identified as, and wanted to remain, British.¹¹⁸ Thanks to the Falklands spirit, Thatcher's popularity rocketed.¹¹⁹ Her determination to get the Islands back, coupled with light casualties, appealed to the patriotic spirit within 1980s Britain. Thatcher was 'a warrior queen,' a national emblem of defiance and British sovereignty.¹²⁰ Her Government had been on the brink of collapse but now she was 'unstoppable.'¹²¹ Within a week support for the Conservatives jumped from 36% to 43%.¹²² Haughey's mishandling of the crisis meant he was now out in the cold, the wettest of the wets. *The Irish Times* published an article on 'the Falkland Sickness' which reported that 'there will be some wry smiles in this country at patriotic outbursts in the House of Commons.'¹²³ One reporter for *The Irish Times* penned a gloating article after interviewing two Falkland Islanders,

"We do hope the British won't do anything foolish", said Angela worriedly. Angela Cairncross and Janet Duncan were two middle-aged ladies who could have walked straight out of the vicarage garden party. As prim and wholesome as their sugar-dusted tea cakes, their English accents clear and precise ... And they believe that the Falklands Islands rightly belong to Argentina.¹²⁴

¹¹⁶ CAC, THCR 6/1/2/4, MT engagement diary, 28 and 29 June 1982, *The Sun*, 29 June 1982. *The Times* lead with an article entitled 'Anglo-Irish links set back 10 years. Dublin plays down rift on consultation.'

¹¹⁷ MacQueen, 'The expedience of tradition,' pp. 38-55.

¹¹⁸ Sarah Oates, *Introduction to Media and Politics* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), p. 119.

¹¹⁹ David Sanders, Hugh Ward, David Marsh and Tony Fletcher, 'Government Popularity and the Falklands War: A Reassessment,' *British Journal of Political Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1987), pp. 281-313.

¹²⁰ Richard Vinen, *The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p. 151.

¹²¹ *The Times*, 21 June 1982.

¹²² NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, letter from Kennedy to DFA, 2 May 1982.

¹²³ *The Irish Times*, 5 Apr. 1982.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 Apr. 1982.

This story echoed London's concerns about the Irish media. As one memo noted,

At a time when national patriotism has been aroused to a high pitch, these stories would be seen as a knife in the back and would provoke a storm of opprobrium. The effects on Anglo-Irish relations would be incalculable and the progress made in recent years in achieving closer co-operation between London and Dublin would be put at risk. The Irish community would become the target of fierce hostility and Irish exports would be effected. Boycotts could not be ruled out. The allegations by Molyneux and Powell that the situation in the Falkland Islands and Northern Ireland are comparable would be given credence.¹²⁵

Throughout the summer, relations continued to decline.

On 30 July, Thatcher stated that 'no commitment exists for Her Majesty's Government to consult the Irish Government on matters affecting Northern Ireland.'¹²⁶ Haughey played dumb. Four days earlier, Douglas Hurd had told Figg that London 'did not consider that they were obliged to consult with the Irish Government on the future of Northern Ireland.'¹²⁷ Dublin sent an official reply to Thatcher's statement,

It is difficult to find any justification for recent British claims that there was no commitment on the part of HMG to consult with Dublin on matters affecting Northern Ireland. The Irish Government regret(s) that Britain has turned away from a course which "undoubtedly contained the possibility for a long term solution to the situation in the North part of this Island."¹²⁸

Later in July, a Northern Ireland review meeting in Dublin concluded that there was little they could do. There was no possibility of a Thatcher-Haughey summit. Haughey's Anglo-Irish Encounter idea would be abandoned and any meetings between officials and British Ministers had to be cleared by Haughey himself. Haughey's team were told not to seek any meetings at official level.¹²⁹ Unofficial contacts reduced and, when they did occur, were carefully analysed.

¹²⁵ NAI, DFA 2013/27/14, to HQ for A.S Mac Kiernan, 'Sanctions on Argentina,' undated.

¹²⁶ 'Engagements,' Commons sitting of 29 July 1982, Hansard HC [1213-1448] cc. 1225-1228.

¹²⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1100, *aide-memoire*, 29 July 1982.

¹²⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, UKE Dublin 223 to FCO, 30 July 1982.

¹²⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1100, Northern Ireland review meeting, 29 July 1982.

During a meeting in September Paul Whiteway, a British diplomat, asked if it was true that the Department of the Taoiseach and the DFA were ‘not talking.’ He also asked if Padraic O’Hannrachain, Haughey’s political assistant and trusted confidant, and Martin Mansergh were influencing Haughey’s Northern Ireland policy or if he was making his own way.¹³⁰ Fitzpatrick, an official from Dublin, said he did not answer these questions, but the implication was clear. Haughey was in charge and that was why relations were in their current state. In a note in the margin, Mansergh recorded that Dunlop had met an official at the British Embassy on 3 September and had ‘set the record straight,’

Such an impression is of course damaging and I am surprised at such ... persisting. I have brought it to the T’s (Taoiseach’s) attention, and leave it to your discretion as to whether you wish to say anything to Mr. Donlon about it.¹³¹

MacKernan also noted at the top of the document that Donlon would ‘mention the cordiality of our affairs formally to the British ambassador when he sees this information!’¹³² Haughey’s team did not want to miss an opportunity to show that relations were somewhat normal. But spats between Thatcher and Haughey’s officials occurred.

On 30 September, Figg called on Neligan to express London’s disappointment with Haughey’s Wolfe Tone Commemoration speech at Bodenstown. Haughey had once again referred to Northern Ireland as a ‘failure.’¹³³ Figg had been instructed to say that it was ‘unhelpful’ to use such terms. Figg then quoted part of a speech Prior had made in Belfast on 20 September on the Northern Ireland Assembly and the guarantee to the minority. Neligan rebuffed the point as the Assembly could only work if there was agreement between all the Northern Ireland parties. He continued that any speeches made by Fianna Fáil in public were

¹³⁰ Padraig O hAnnrachain, Irish civil servant. Head of the Irish Government Press Office. Martin Mansergh, Irish civil servant. Director of Research, Policy and Special Advisor on Northern Ireland. Haughey’s Northern Ireland Political Advisor.

¹³¹ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1057, lunch meeting with Whiteway, 1 Sept. 1982.

¹³² *iBid.*,

¹³³ Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, p. 673.

the result of a ‘full analysis of the concepts on which they were based ... it was unlikely, to say the least, that our convictions in this regard would be modified by his *démarche*.’¹³⁴

The final death knell sounded when Haughey offered to enfranchise British citizens in Ireland. It had been suggested that both governments would allow British and Irish citizens residing in their countries full voting rights. Dublin doubted whether London was sincerely interested, while London accused Dublin of delaying their decision.¹³⁵ Following the Falklands, back-bench Conservatives suggested that Irish voting rights should be limited. According to an informant, ‘the reason being for this is the stand taken by us on the Falklands and on the annual review of agricultural prices within the European community.’¹³⁶ London was out for revenge. The voting move was rebuffed by Thatcher who noted, ‘we do not want the Irish Government to give the vote to British citizens. They are pitifully few and it would not be a *quid pro quo* for the vote of the millions of Irish citizens who reside there.’¹³⁷ A meeting was suggested to further discuss the matter but Thatcher adamantly refused. She noted, ‘events have changed ... Certainly I have no intention of having further bilateral meetings with the Taoiseach.’¹³⁸ Relations between Dublin and London were officially ‘cool.’¹³⁹

Thatcher ended Anglo-Irish relations with Haughey. Haughey blamed Thatcher for going ahead with the White Paper without consulting him.¹⁴⁰ But Thatcher found Haughey’s switch on EEC sanctions unforgivable, a disastrous decision that came at a time when relations had already deteriorated. London believed that ‘Irish neutrality (was) useful as a cloak for anti-British attitude’ and that the ‘impact on Anglo-Irish relations (were) to be long lasting.’¹⁴¹ The Falklands dispute gave Ireland the opportunity to influence international affairs, but Haughey’s sudden switch in policy hindered Ireland’s standing in the global

¹³⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/1093, meeting with Figg, 30 Sept. 1982.

¹³⁵ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, letter from Corr to O Floinn, 26 May 1982.

¹³⁶ NAI, DFA 2012/59/1688, O’Ceallaigh 169 to Hennessy, 19 May 1982.

¹³⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, FCO 87 to Dublin, 26 July 1982.

¹³⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, letter from Armstrong to Cole, 6 Aug. 1982.

¹³⁹ *The Irish Times*, 7 Aug. 1982.

¹⁴⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, UKE Dublin 164 to FCO, 26 May 1982.

¹⁴¹ CAC, THCR 1/20/3/19, UKE Dublin to FCO, 22 June 1982.

political arena and isolated Ireland further from Britain.¹⁴² Haughey's handling of the Falklands had gained him some support at home, but an unusual sequence of events throughout the latter half of 1982 meant that his time in the Taoiseach's Office was to be short-lived.

GUBU: Irish Scandals, 1982

The July 1982 Galway-East by-election was key to Haughey's majority. The constituency was a Fianna Fáil strong-hold, but the death of Johnny Callanan put Haughey's Government at risk. Fianna Fáil had been reliant on the vote of the speaker, but a Fine Gael victory in Galway-East would tip the balance. Fine Gael were prepared to go to extremes to get the seat. On 22 June Jim Mitchell, former Minister for Justice, told the Dáil that when Haughey had installed a new telephone system in his first term in 1980, he had included an override facility that allowed him to listen in to all telephone calls in Leinster House.¹⁴³ The story was front page news in Ireland the next day.¹⁴⁴ *The Irish Press* maintained that the system was nothing more than a 'sophisticated switchboard' where the override button only worked if the another console also had it. Haughey dismissed the implication that he had installed the system to listen in to the calls of his and Fine Gael Ministers. He claimed that he did not know the facility existed and that, if he did, he would not have left it there for FitzGerald to discover on his entering the Taoiseach's Office in June 1981. Attention then turned to FitzGerald, did he know about the system? Had he used it? FitzGerald denied having any knowledge of the system and ordered a technician to remove the facility immediately. The fact that the public believed FitzGerald, but continued to suspect Haughey, is indicative of the mood towards Haughey in 1982.¹⁴⁵

In July, nurse Bridie Gargan was brutally murdered by a man wielding a fake gun and a hammer. The suspect had attacked Gargan with the hammer in the backseat of her car. The back window was spattered with blood and a passing ambulance, assuming the suspect was

¹⁴² Michael Kennedy, 'Reviewed Work: A Small State at the Top Table. Memories of Ireland on the Security Council, 1981-82 by Noel Dorr,' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, vol. 101, no. 402 (2012), pp. 242-244.

¹⁴³ 'Postal and Telecommunications Services Bill, 1982: Second Stage (Resumed),' Dáil Éireann Debate vol. 336 no. 5, 22 June 1982. Jim Mitchell, Fine Gael TD 1977-2002. Minister for Justice 1981-1982.

¹⁴⁴ *The Cork Examiner*, *The Evening Herald*, *The Irish Examiner*, *The Irish Press*, *The Irish Times*, 23 June 1982.

¹⁴⁵ Dwyer, *Haughey's Forty Years*, pp. 208-211, Joyce and Murtagh, *The Boss*, pp. 196-198, for more details of the override scandal.

a doctor taking the injured party to hospital due to a medical sticker on the windscreen, escorted the car from Phoenix Park to a nearby hospital. On arrival the suspect drove off and abandoned the car, and a dying Gargan, nearby. A few days later, farmer Dónal Dunne was murdered with his own shotgun in Edenderry. Dunne's car and gun were both taken by the suspect. At first the Garda did not link the two cases but in August Malcolm Mac Arthur, an eccentric Dublin socialite, was arrested and charged with the two murders. The real controversy came when MacArthur was arrested at the home of Haughey's Attorney General, Connolly. The implication of Haughey's appointed legal advisor to the Government was enough, but as Connolly was a bachelor who lived alone, rumours of a homosexual relationship between him and MacArthur added fuel to the media fire. Connolly's initial refusal to give a statement, and his departure to America for a holiday two days after MacArthur's arrest, implied that he had something to hide. Haughey was forced to demand his return home and accepted his resignation. That same day Haughey hosted a press conference on public sector pay. One reporter baited Haughey, asking him why he had not yet congratulated the Garda on their detective work. Haughey, who disliked being interrupted by his advisors during press conferences, walked into the trap. 'It was a very good piece of police work, slowly, painstakingly putting the whole thing together and eventually finding the right man.'¹⁴⁶ Haughey implicated an as-of-yet innocent man in a murder investigation. The Irish media were unable to publish the comments but Conor Cruise O'Brien, Haughey's long-term advisory and then writer for *The Irish Times*, took four of Haughey's own adjectives from that press conferences and coined the infamous acronym, GUBU.¹⁴⁷ 'You've got to hand it to the man. He is grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre and unprecedented.'¹⁴⁸ More criticism was to come Haughey's way in his GUBU year.

The Dowra affair came in September. Garda Thomas Nangle had been charged with assaulting a civilian, James McGowan, during an argument in a bar. McGowan was called as

¹⁴⁶ Joyce and Murtagh, *The Boss*, pp. 233-234. Joyce and Murtagh's eleventh chapter i is the most comprehensive report on the entire MacArthur murder case, pp. 211-236. The MacArthur case was not included in the Irish state papers release for 1982.

¹⁴⁷ GUBU is still used in Irish political discourse today to describe a scandal or to refer back to Haughey's 1982 administration. Conor Cruise O'Brien, a former Labour TD, civil servant and columnist for *The Evening Herald*. Following the outbreak of The Troubles, O'Brien became a staunch defender of unionism. He was generally disliked within Irish politics but was particularly hated by Fianna Fáil.

¹⁴⁸ *The Irish Times*, 24 Aug. 1982.

a chief witness but on the morning of the trial, he was arrested by RUC Special Branch. McGowan was told he was under arrest due to information passed to the RUC by the Garda. The charge against Nangle, who was the brother-in-law of Haughey's Minister for Justice Seán Doherty, not only led to a breakdown in RUC-Garda co-operation, but also led to accusations of collusion instigated by Ministers in Haughey's government.¹⁴⁹ In October, Doherty was again embroiled in controversy when a state security car accompanying him on a night out crashed. Doherty's recollection of the evening's events was confused. He claimed to have returned to his hotel at 2am, but was sighted at 4:30am. The time difference was not important in itself but the fact that Doherty could not get his story straight was suspicious, especially in the aftermath of the Dowra affair.¹⁵⁰

On 1 October Charles McCreevy, TD for Kildare, lodged a no confidence vote against Haughey.¹⁵¹ During the cabinet meeting that followed Desmond O'Malley, Minister for Industry and Commerce, and Martin O'Donoghue, Minister for Education, resigned in protest against Haughey as leader.¹⁵² Haughey survived this as the Gang of 22 were the only party members to vote against him in the open roll-call vote, but his days as Taoiseach were numbered. Fianna Fáil's October budget plan, 'The Way Forward,' called for 'severe cuts' and tax increases.¹⁵³ In light of this, the Worker's Party withdrew their support for Haughey's Government and voted against him in another no confidence motion. FitzGerald wrote later that Fianna Fáil had 'discredited themselves with the public, and it was time for them to go.'¹⁵⁴ An election was called on 2 November 1982, the third in only eighteen months, the result of which was inconclusive. A coalition was created between Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party with FitzGerald appointed as Taoiseach and Dick Spring as Tánaiste.¹⁵⁵ Haughey was out of the Taoiseach's Office again.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁹ Dwyer, *Charlie: The Political Biography of Charles J. Haughey* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1987), pp. 185-186.

¹⁵⁰ *The Evening Herald*, 17 Oct. 1982, *The Irish Examiner*, *The Evening Herald*, 18 Oct. 1982, Dwyer, *Charlie*, p. 185, Dunlop, *Yes, Taoiseach*, p. 276, for a detailed account of the Dowra and Doherty affairs please see Joyce and Murtagh, *The Boss*, pp. 237-250.

¹⁵¹ *The Irish Times*, 2 Oct. 1982.

¹⁵² Dermot Keogh, 'Ireland, 1972-84,' in *A New History of Ireland, Volume II: Medieval Ireland 1169-1534*, ed., by Art Cosgrove (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 387.

¹⁵³ *The Irish Press*, 22 Oct. 1982, *The Evening Herald*, 28 Oct. 1982, *Anglo-Celt*, 29 Oct. 1982.

¹⁵⁴ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 418 and Jim Cordell, *Essential Government and Politics* (London: Collins Educational, 1992), p. 272.

¹⁵⁵ Dick Spring, Irish Labour Party TD 1981-2002, leader 1982-1997. Tánaiste 1982-1987, 1993-1994, 1994-1997.

¹⁵⁶ Noel Wheelan, *Fianna Fáil: A Biography of the Party* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 2011), pp. 214-216.

On 18 December, Liffeygate broke.¹⁵⁷ The telephones of Bruce Arnold, a journalist for the *Irish Independent*, Geraldine Kennedy and Vincent Browne, founder of the political magazine *Magill*, had been tapped under Doherty's orders throughout the summer of 1982.¹⁵⁸ The taps were sanctioned by a Garda warrant for various reasons including a new category of 'national security,' but taps were usually only sanctioned when serious crimes were being investigated. Due to Kennedy's articles in *The Irish Times* in particular, there were suspicions that a mole was present in Haughey's cabinet. The only tap that was proven to exist on a Fianna Fáil member was on O'Donoghue. On 20 January, FitzGerald's Minister for Justice, Michael Noonan, released three statements.¹⁵⁹

The first announced the resignation of Patrick McLaughlin and Joseph Ainsworth, Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the Garda respectively. The second accused Doherty and Ray MacSharry, former Tánaiste, of recording a conversation with O'Donoghue using a tape recorder.¹⁶⁰ Noonan had a transcript of that phone call, and had also found out that the tape recorder had been brought to MacSharry by T.J. Ainsworth, then Deputy Commissioner in charge of the Security Section in the Garda. Ainsworth had recovered the tape and agreed to have it transcribed before delivering the despatch back to Doherty. Noonan's third statement accused Doherty of gross incompetence and abuse of resources while confirming that none of those who had been tapped were involved in criminal activity.¹⁶¹ Noonan's statements were explosive.

Haughey announced the resignations of MacSharry and Doherty the following day and promised to set up an official inquiry.¹⁶² Haughey categorically denied any knowledge of what Doherty and MacSharry had done but was tainted by association.¹⁶³ Haughey was

¹⁵⁷ *The Irish Times* ran the story exclusively. Liffeygate alluded to the Watergate scandal of the Nixon administration.

¹⁵⁸ Bruce Arnold, British journalist and author.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Noonan, Fine Gael TD 1981-2011. Minister for Justice 1982-1986.

¹⁶⁰ Ray MacSharry, Fianna Fáil TD 1969-1988. Tánaiste 1982.

¹⁶¹ NAI, TAOIS 2013/100/100, three statements by Noonan, 20 Jan. 1983.

¹⁶² NAI, TAOIS 2013/100/100, statement by Haughey, 21 Jan. 1983.

¹⁶³ Haughey was adamant he had nothing to do with the taps during an interview with RTÉ that can be found here, <http://www.rte.ie/archives/2018/0116/933639-phone-tapping-allegations/>. In 1992, Doherty told RTÉ that Haughey had been handed transcripts of the tapped phones. Haughey then resigned as leader of Fianna Fáil and Taoiseach.

accused of trying to silence Geraldine Kennedy and of preventing freedom of the press.¹⁶⁴ The scandal also revealed the split in Fianna Fáil. Although no taps were found on their phones, rumours surrounded a 'Gang of 22' Haughey dissenters who had had their conversations taped. This included O'Malley, McCreevy, George Colley, Seamus Brennan, TD for Dublin South, and O'Donoghue.¹⁶⁵ Once again Haughey was at the epicentre of an Irish scandal.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how relations between Haughey and Thatcher further deteriorated due to the Falklands War. As we will see throughout this thesis, the actions of Haughey would change how Thatcher viewed the Republic of Ireland and affected her relationship with the FitzGerald administration. Haughey's refusal to support the UK at a time of crisis proved to Thatcher that the Republic of Ireland was not a friend to the UK, and she punished him accordingly by refusing to meet with him. This proves that Thatcher did take politics personally, especially when it came to her New Right inspired patriotism. Further to this, the successive scandals that affected the Haughey administration from July to December 1982 would have proved to Thatcher that her initial judgement of Haughey was ill informed. Haughey himself had been treated with suspicion due to the Arms Crisis. Now, there was evidence of corruption from within his party that had affected the Garda and the justice system. In light of this, Thatcher's decision to refuse to meet Haughey could be seen as an act of self preservation.

Haughey entered 1982 on rocky terms with Thatcher. His indecisiveness during the Falklands war reeked of Brit-bashing republicanism. The sinking of the *Belgrano* was a mirror of the *Shanbeg*. British secrecy over the incident and their delayed apology intensified Anglophobia in Ireland. After Haughey re-instated neutrality in May, Hibernophobia in

¹⁶⁴ *The Irish Examiner*, 24 Jan. 1983.

¹⁶⁵ *The Evening Herald*, 20 Jan. 1983. The rest of the gang were David Andrews, TD for Dún Laoghaire, Sylvester Barrett, TD for Clare, Thomas Bellew, TD for Louth, Hugh Byrne, TD for Wexford, Sean Byrne, TD for Tipperary South, Hugh Conaghan, TD for Donegal North-East, Pádraig Faulkner, TD for Louth, Tom Fitzpatrick, TD for Dublin South-Central, Séan French, TD for Cork North-Central, Jim Gibbons, TD for Carlow-Kilkenny, Mary Harney, TD for Dublin South-West, Tom Meaney, TD for Cork North-West, Bobby Molloy, who had been Minister for Defence under Lynch, Ciarán Murphy, TD for Wicklow, Willie O'Dea, TD for Limerick-East, Joe Walsh, TD for Cork South-West, and Pearse Wyse, TD for Cork South-Central. Wyse, Harney, O'Malley and Molloy later set up/joined the Progressive Democrats.

Britain sharpened. Boycotting of Irish products was evident, as was anti-Haughey sentiment. Thatcher herself was intensely angry over the decision. Her once rosy friendship with Haughey soured and, with a stroke of her pen, ended for the time being. Haughey's motivations for the decision remain murky, historians and contemporaries can point to various conclusions to explain the episode. Haughey was either appealing to his grass-roots, green base with the upcoming Galway-East by-election in mind, or disagreed with the advice of Iveagh House following the attack on *Belgrano*. There is little evidence to form a decisive final point on this matter. Perhaps when Haughey's private papers are released in 2022, concrete evidence will be available. The results of his actions, however, are certain. Haughey side-stepped the relationship he had once deemed 'historic,' overruled his country's traditional stance of neutrality then u-turned that decision when he realised the invasion necessitated British military intervention. Haughey was in trouble with Thatcher and at home.

The latter half of 1982 produced a Fianna Fáil scandal per month. In June there was the over-ride scandal. Had Haughey installed a telephone system that allowed him to listen in to calls by his Ministers and the opposition? In August, the fact that Haughey's Attorney General had a murderer as a guest in his home was further scandalised by the fact that he left the country for a holiday. Connolly believed he was innocent but his decision to go ahead with his trip made it seem as though he was above the law, and had Haughey's blessing. September saw the first incident linked with Doherty. The Dowra affair exposed collusion and nepotism within Haughey's Government that was sanctioned by the Minister of Justice. Then in October, Doherty's hazy recollection of the night his state car crashed painted a picture of a party-hard Minister, more interested in having a good time than telling the truth. The final outrage came in December when it was revealed that Doherty had tapped the phones of prominent journalists and, possibly, some of Haughey's enemies within Fianna Fáil. Haughey pleaded innocence but Liffeygate hung over him. Haughey was 'bad' and FitzGerald was 'good.'

Chapter 4

The Return of FitzGerald, 1983-1984

If you had the good fortune to sit next to Garret FitzGerald at dinner- wrapped round by his natural warmth and curiosity, as well as numbed by the sheer volume of Dublin-tinctured words that tumbled out of him- you might learn many dozens of mind-bogglingly bizarre facts.¹

When Garret FitzGerald returned to the Taoiseach's office in December 1982, he faced the task of repairing an Anglo-Irish relationship at its most fragile since Bloody Sunday in 1972. Thatcher was furious with Haughey over his *volte-face* during the Falklands War. She felt he had betrayed her and, in-turn, believed that Dublin could not be trusted. British civil servants knew that she found FitzGerald difficult to work with - his notorious verbosity clashing with her notorious impatience.² On one occasion she fell asleep during an Anglo-Irish summit meeting.³ Robert Armstrong, the Cabinet Secretary and a very important figure in Anglo-Irish relations reported that FitzGerald,

thought that he might have wrecked Anglo-Irish relations: you and he were on a boat, not under cover, the conditions were not particularly good and you were minded to go into the cabin, but Dr. FitzGerald persuaded you not to do so and you were almost immediately drenched by a passing wave.⁴

Yet Thatcher's advisors appreciated that he was 'a formidable, if rather unorthodox, political leader.'⁵ Moreover, according to the then Deputy to the Cabinet Office, David Goodall, Thatcher had been deeply distressed by British casualties in the Falklands War.⁶ When he

¹ *The Economist*, 26 May 2011.

² TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, briefing on FitzGerald, undated.

³ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 300 and Robin Renwick, *A Journey with Margaret Thatcher: Foreign Policy Under the Iron Lady* (London: Biteback, 2013), p. 115. Renwick revealed that after MT had fallen asleep, FitzGerald asked if she thought he was Welsh because she called him 'Gareth.'

⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/508, minute from Armstrong to MT, 16 Oct. 1981.

⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, briefing on FitzGerald, undated.

⁶ Sir David Goodall, British diplomat. Deputy Secretary (Overseas and Defence), Cabinet Office 1982-1984, Deputy Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Defence and Intelligence) 1984-1987, High Commissioner to India, 1987-1991.

observed at a meeting with her at the end of 1982 that it was a ‘scandalous fact’ that the only place that British soldiers were being killed was in Northern Ireland, she replied that she wanted ‘to do something about Ireland’ once the 1983 election was safely negotiated. Robert Armstrong heard much the same from her.⁷ FitzGerald wanted meetings between ministers and the two leaders to restart. In his letter responding to Thatcher’s congratulation on his re-election, he suggested that they should meet after a review of the current situation in Northern Ireland had been completed.⁸

This chapter will focus on 1983 and 1984, years of remarkable wax and wane in Anglo-Irish relations. They began with Anglo-Irish relations in the deep freeze. It proved difficult for FitzGerald to meet Thatcher. Her anger with Haughey had a knock on effect on the new Taoiseach. FitzGerald’s most visible initiative was the establishment of the New Ireland Forum (NIF). Originally intended to include all shades of non-paramilitary Irish and northern Irish opinion, unionists boycotted it and the forum instead became a talking shop for moderate Irish nationalism. Its first report in 1984 provided three options for settlement of the Northern question, a unitary state, joint sovereignty and a federal solution. It demonstrated moderate nationalism was willing to make compromises on Irish unity, though it had no effect on political unionism which viewed the report with disdain. The report’s release coincided with the first PIRA attempt on Thatcher’s life, the Brighton bomb, which deeply affected her and almost certainly influenced her ‘out ... out ... out ...’ speech. She rejected all of the forum’s findings out of hand. Ironically, the speech that upset everybody benefited Anglo-Irish relations in the long run. Thatcher was deeply embarrassed by what was undiplomatic behaviour and, without ever apologising, agreed to meet with FitzGerald.

This chapter is key to understanding how Thatcher operated as a leader. At this point, she is still actively engaged with the Northern Ireland problem as reflected in her meetings with FitzGerald. When she makes a mistake (the out out out speech) she does not apologise as such. Her speech comes from her fear of a take over from Dublin, reflecting a deep seeded mistrust in her Irish counterparts. This chapter will also mark’s the end of the first phase of

⁷ Renwick, *A Journey with Margaret Thatcher*, p. 111 and Armstrong interviewed for ‘Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,’ RTE, 2013.

⁸ CAC, THCR 3/1/27, letter from FitzGerald to MT, 17 Dec. 1982.

Thatcher's interest in Anglo-Irish relations and sees the beginning of phase two, disengagement.

Enter FitzGerald

FitzGerald had watched the deterioration of Haughey's relationship with Thatcher with alarm. He was not impressed with the British white paper on Northern Ireland, published on 5 April 1982, but felt it was not the role of the Irish government to sabotage an effort that still had power-sharing at its heart.⁹ Haughey, as we have seen, had outright rejected the proposals. FitzGerald and his Foreign Minister, Peter Barry, were also critical of Haughey's overselling of the Anglo-Irish summits in 1980 and 1981 which had so riled Thatcher.¹⁰ Indeed, when they met in November 1984, Thatcher hand-bagged in her inimitable style Dermot Nally,

I remember that at a previous meeting certain people (at this point she directed her gaze at Mr. Dermot Nally and pointed her finger accusingly at him) slipped in words in a *communiqué* which subsequently got me into great difficulties. I am thinking of the *communiqué* issued after my meeting with Mr. Haughey. That will not happen again. I will never let anything into a *communiqué* without going over it word by word.¹¹

Dublin learnt their lesson and Anglo-Irish discussions in the FitzGerald era were marked by a great deal of secrecy. In 1984 Barry criticised Haughey and his administration for ruining Anglo-Irish meetings with his post-conference statements,

Irish leaders have in the recent past made ludicrously inflated claims for the significance of their meetings with the British with results which have set back the prospects of peace, reconciliation and stability, through damaging the credibility of our Government. The Taoiseach, the Tánaiste (Dick Spring) and I have, conscious of the childish and damaging irresponsibility of this approach and concerned to achieve real progress rather than mere political advantage in this state, refrained very carefully

⁹ 'Northern Ireland, A Framework for Devolution' is available on CAIN <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/cmd8541.htm>.

¹⁰ Peter Barry, Fine Gael TD 1969-1997. Deputy Leader of Fine Gael 1977-1987, 1991-1993, Minister for Foreign Affairs 1982-1987, Tánaiste 1987.

¹¹ NAI, DFA 2014/32/2059, draft attached to summary of meeting between FitzGerald and MT, in Chequers on 19 Nov. 1984. The London's record of the meeting notes MT's comments as 'The Prime Minister concluded that in that event we could only aim for a very general *communiqué*.' See TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2.

- in hindsight, perhaps a little too carefully - from presenting our meeting at Chequers as involving an “historic breakthrough”.¹²

FitzGerald also believed that Haughey’s second administration had been reckless in its handling of the Falklands War. He had been relieved when Haughey had backed the EEC sanctions on Argentina. He was dismayed when, after the sinking of the *Belgrano*, Paddy Power had denounced Britain as ‘aggressors’ and the government announced that it was abandoning sanctions.¹³ It was all a misjudgement. FitzGerald concluded that,

The damage to Anglo-Irish relations through this ill-conceived and, in the form in which it was announced, illegal decision would clearly be immense. It was difficult to see in the light of *acte gratuit* it would ever be possible to make progress towards a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland in conjunction with a British government led by Margaret Thatcher.¹⁴

Fine Gael policy had supported devolution and power sharing but, in the light of the experience of Sunningdale, downplayed the Irish dimension. However, by 1982 it was clear to FitzGerald that this was not sustainable. The polarisation brought about by the Hunger strikes, the rise of Provisional Sinn Féin as a political force and the demands of Hume and the SDLP for an Irish dimension meant that his instinct, which was to try to create dialogue and agreement with the unionists, had to be given up in the light of unionist intransigence over power sharing. His ‘constitutional crusade’ was designed to appeal to a certain kind of unionist liberal but they were a rare breed in the 1980s. He concluded that going above their heads with the British would have to be attempted even if it meant ruining his reputation amongst them. He feared the alternative was an escalation in violence resulting in outright civil war. Much of FitzGerald’s ruminations on a new approach to Northern Ireland had taken place in the spring of 1982 while he was preparing the prestigious Dimpleby lecture.¹⁵

¹² NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/776, remarks by Barry at the launch of Clonmel Chamber of Commerce “Start-Your-Own-Business” competition, 23 Nov. 1984.

¹³ FitzGerald asked Haughey to restate the governments position and asked specifically if Power’s statement was reflective of official policy. See ‘Private Notice Question- Falkland Islands Crisis,’ Dáil Éireann debate, 4 May 1982, vol. 334 no. 1.

¹⁴ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 409.

¹⁵ An annual lecture delivered in memory of Richard Dimpleby, a BBC broadcaster. The lecture is given by a prominent public figure. Previous lectures were delivered by Lord Halisham, MT’s Lord Chancellor, and Roy Jenkins, President of the EEC. FitzGerald’s speech was published in 1982. FitzGerald, *Irish Identities: Dimpleby Lecture* (London: BBC Books, 1982).

FitzGerald rejected simple solutions such as repartition, integration with Britain, an independent Northern Ireland or enforced reunification, and instead called for ‘a political structure in Ireland and between Britain and Ireland that would adequately express and at the same time safeguard the senses of identity of the two traditions in Ireland.’¹⁶ He went on to propose a joint security and justice system for Ireland. He acknowledged that the political structures for a settlement would be complex, and reiterated his commitment to building a pluralist Ireland of common citizenship with Britain.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the Electoral Amendment Bill of 1983, and successful referendum in 1984, can be interpreted as a gesture of goodwill to Thatcher, and unionism, more generally.¹⁸

The speech, broadcast on 20 May, was well received and may well have helped Fine Gael hold their seat in the Dublin West by-election.¹⁹ However, the proposals for an All-Ireland police force and court eventually turned up as an election issue when the Haughey government fell in November 1982. Fianna Fáil claimed that it would mean County Kerry would be ‘policed by the RUC’ during the subsequent election campaign. When Jim Prior referred to the proposal, Haughey issued a histrionic statement levelling the gravest of allegations against FitzGerald,

The fact that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland knew in advance what Dr. FitzGerald would say in a speech on Northern Ireland reveals now the degree of collusion that exists between the leader of the Fine Gael party and the British government. We have known for some time that Dr. FitzGerald had secretly collaborated with the British government in supporting and promoting the disastrous Northern Ireland Assembly proposal but have been unable to secure either a confirmation or denial from Dr. FitzGerald. A feature of this election has been support emanating from British government circles, radio and television networks and leading newspapers for Dr. FitzGerald and the Fine Gael Party. It is abundantly clear that this

¹⁶ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 410-411.

¹⁷ In one of the anomalies that bedevil Anglo-Irish relations, Irish citizens were allowed to vote in British general elections. Conversely, British citizens in the Irish republic could not do so. FitzGerald championed the move though MT did not consider it very important. TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, FCO to Dublin 87 of 26 July 1982.

¹⁸ Gerry Whyte, *Social Inclusion and the Legal System: Public Interest Law in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2015), p. 37. The Irish Electoral (Amendment) Act was passed into law on 21 Dec. 1983. It can be found at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1983/act/36/enacted/en/html>. The June 1984 referendum changed the Irish constitution by extending voting rights to certain non-Irish citizens. The Ninth Amendment was passed by 75.4%. *The Evening Herald* and *The Irish Times*, 16 June 1984.

¹⁹ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 410-11.

support has been coming from Britain in return for Dr. FitzGerald's support for British policy in Northern Ireland. I believe the situation which has now been revealed represents one of the threats for our political independence since the last war.²⁰

During the election, FitzGerald's one speech on Northern Ireland called for a 'complete and radical rethinking of British policy' on Northern Ireland. The Republic of Ireland had to take effective measures against violence.²¹ The second major playing of the 'green card' by Haughey in 1982 failed to arrest the rise in FitzGerald and Fine Gael's popularity. Fine Gael finished five seats behind Fianna Fáil in the election. A coalition government was swiftly negotiated with Labour. However, it was to be a fractious four years in office with passionate disagreements between both parties on public expenditure and taxation policies. The government also had little economic luck with persistently low growth making every tax and spend decision difficult. Such were the difficulties between Labour and Fine Gael on the economy that FitzGerald would almost certainly have dissolved the Dáil if the Northern Irish issue was not there. Only the conviction in both parties that Haughey was a danger on the economic and Northern Irish fronts held the coalition together.²²

FitzGerald was certainly right that if Haughey had been returned as Taoiseach in the 1982 election, he would have had an extremely difficult problem in having any kind of a relationship with Thatcher. He continued making unrealistic assertions that had no chance of success, notably in his Ard Fheis speech in February 1983.²³ In January 1983, Robert Armstrong took the view that the deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations under Haughey was due to the Irish and it 'was for the Irish Government to take the initiative in restoring them ... the British Government has no interest in seeking to force the pace, still less in appearing to woo or pursue the Irish.'²⁴ Armstrong warned that it would be in Britain's interest to rebuff efforts by FitzGerald to restore normal relations.²⁵

²⁰ Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, p. 713. Haughey's statement was also recorded in TNA UK, PREM 19/1068.

²¹ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 419.

²² See especially FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 424-5.

²³ Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, pp. 733-742.

²⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Armstrong minute to MT, 13 Jan. 1983.

²⁵ CAC, THCR 2/6/2/130, Armstrong letter to Enoch Powell, 21 Dec. 1982.

A proposed visit by FitzGerald to Belfast in January was discouraged presumably for fear of protests.²⁶ But FitzGerald went ahead and made a speech at Queen's University on 27 January.²⁷ He called for support from Europe in dealing with northern Ireland and ridiculed the men of violence.²⁸ FitzGerald reiterated his determination to 'develop a new and dynamic relationship with both communities in Northern Ireland (and) with the British Government.'²⁹ His message to Thatcher was clear; you need to forgive and forget, sooner rather than later, the mistakes of the previous administration.

Throughout 1983, FitzGerald wanted the NIF to develop a number of alternative proposals. In 1984, negotiations with the British government, resulting in an agreement in the autumn of 1984, would take place. Before FitzGerald could instigate his plan, he needed to establish a relationship with London. To this end FitzGerald strengthened his foreign affairs team. The Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Seán Donlon, the Assistant Secretary for the Anglo-Irish Division, Michael Lillis, and the Secretary to the Government, Dermot Nally were the key figures on the civil service side. Peter Barry, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Dick Spring, Tánaiste and leader of the Labour Party, were the key figures on the political side. In June 1983, Noel Dorr was made Ambassador to London. Anthony Parsons, who had become Thatcher's chief foreign policy advisor, but had been Dorr's opposite number at the UN during the Falklands war was aghast at Dorr's appointment. He considered his behaviour 'intolerable' during the crisis. However, he also felt that Dorr was 'extremely sound' on Anglo-Irish relations and the North.³⁰ While the political relationship between Thatcher and FitzGerald was subject to frequent strain, the relationship between Nally and his British counterpart, Armstrong was to prove remarkably stable and productive.³¹ Meanwhile, the violence continued.

²⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, FCO to Dublin 7 of 20 Jan. 1983.

²⁷ *The Evening Herald*, 27 Jan. 1983.

²⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, Dublin 39 to FCO of 28 Jan. 1983. FitzGerald's speech is not recorded in the TAOIS or DFA files. The Thatcher Government accorded it attention as it signified FitzGerald's plan and the policies he was presenting to Europe.

²⁹ *iBid.*, and Dublin 83 to FCO of 12 Mar. 1983.

³⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Parsons to Coles (PM's Office), 15 June 1983.

³¹ See especially FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 468-9.

In December 1982, the INLA carried out a devastating attack on the Dropping Well Inn in Ballykelly. The bomb killed 11 soldiers and 5 civilians. In November and December 1982, there were also five shooting incidents where the RUC and the army opened fire and killed seven Catholics in disputed circumstances. This led to claims that a ‘shoot-to-kill’ policy was in operation in Northern Ireland.³² More encouraging for London was the first sign that extradition, which the Irish government had refused to countenance for political offences, was back on the agenda. The Irish Supreme Court ordered the extradition of Dominic McGlinchey, a senior INLA member, to Northern Ireland. The court ruled that he had murdered a civilian, therefore, his crime was not politically motivated.³³ Subsequently, the Irish Attorney-General, Peter Sutherland, indicated that the British government might want to look at other cases that could have fallen under the Supreme Court judgement.³⁴ The question of extradition would remain a poison in Anglo-Irish relations over the rest of the decade. Indeed when Sutherland met British law officers he was not convinced that attacks on military targets would qualify for extradition.³⁵ Another spectre was the electoral rise of Provisional Sinn Féin.

A report suggested they would do well in the forthcoming UK general election. Gerry Adams was likely to win in West Belfast. Terrorism would continue but the ‘Provisionals are likely to apply their own constraints in an attempt to balance terrorism with increasing political activity.’³⁶

FitzGerald faced immediate difficulties when it came to the NIF. Firstly, his liberal credentials were tarnished when he allowed Haughey to out maneuverer him on an anti-abortion amendment to the Irish constitution. The first significant constitutional change was

³² TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, Dublin 355 of 8 Dec. 1982. On 11 Nov. 1982, 3 unarmed IRA members were shot and killed at an RUC checkpoint in Lurgan. On 24 November Michael Tighe was killed by an undercover RUC unit at a farm near Lurgan. The farm had previously been used by the IRA to store arsenal. In December 1982, two INLA members, Roddie Carroll and Seamus Grew, were shot by special support unit Officer James McBride of the RUC. His witness statement can be found at NAI, DFA 2014/32/1930. See McKittrick, *Lost Lives* for more on the victims and the circumstances surrounding their deaths. For more on security operations during The Troubles see Taylor, *Brits*. Shoot-to-kill will be further discussed in chpt. 6.

³³ NAI, TAOIS 2012/90/976, memo from Mansergh to FitzGerald, 9 Dec. 1982, and letter from unnamed legal advisor to Neligan, 10 Dec. 1982.

³⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, FCO 240 of 31 Dec. 1982.

³⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, H. Steel (Attorney General’s office) to GL Angel (NIO), 17 Mar. 1983.

³⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, Robert Armstrong to MT, ‘Northern Ireland: The Provisionals and the General Election,’ 12 Apr. 1983.

a disastrous and unworkable addition, passed after the most bitter referendum in the history of the state.³⁷ Moreover, many of his colleagues saw the Northern Irish question as secondary to the economic crisis of unsustainable government deficits and unemployment. On 22 February 1983, they rejected his proposal for a NIF, which he wanted to move ahead with before the SDLP's proposal for a Council for a New Ireland gained traction.³⁸ FitzGerald had to engage in a series of manoeuvres to get the proposal past his government colleagues.

At a dinner in January, Seán Donlon told Leonard Figg that 'contact between Foreign Ministers should be close' and spoke of a new initiative that would 'do something to strengthen the position of the SDLP.'³⁹ Haughey reluctantly came on board but made clear that the NIF's purpose was to outline a plan before an all-round constitutional conference that would produce a final constitutional settlement. This language put even the Alliance party off attending let alone the UUP and the DUP.⁴⁰ On 11 March, Peter Barry made a speech that outlined Irish government policy. He wanted Britain to apply pressure to the Ulster unionists,

Is it unreasonable to ask that British policy should reflect the view of the majority of the people of the United Kingdom? How long more will one million people be allowed to impede not only the reconciliation of five million people on this island but the development of normal relations between the 58 millions who live on both these islands?⁴¹

British Thinking

The EEC summit in Brussels in March 1983 provided the first opportunity for an Anglo-Irish meeting. Both sides would be at the same location without either having to face government and public criticism by travelling to the other's preferred meeting place. Logistical

³⁷ The referendum came about following the ruling in the US in 1981 that anti-abortion laws were unconstitutional. Anti-abortion groups and the Church then pressurized the Irish Government to reaffirm its position so that the Irish Supreme Court would be unable to come to a similar conclusion. FitzGerald held traditional views on abortion but a whispering campaign within the Dáil suggested that he had gone 'soft.' See FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 416-417.

³⁸ The SDLP's Council would be exclusive to constitutional nationalist parties. See FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 462-463 and comments by FitzGerald, 'Ceisteanna-Questions. Oral Answers. British Policy on Northern Ireland,' Dáil Éireann debate, 11 May 1983.

³⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Brussels 329 to FCO of 24 Jan. 1983.

⁴⁰ See especially FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 464-6.

⁴¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, Dublin 82 of 12 Mar. 1983.

convenience aside, the meeting was a cause of concern for both parties. London wanted to keep the meeting as short as possible, and initially suggested a *tête-à-tête* lasting thirty minutes. For FitzGerald this was not long enough. He was keen to ‘pick up the threads after his absence from power.’⁴² Thatcher’s team felt they could limit what ‘he does and says ... in connection with Northern Ireland for as long as possible’ by meeting with him.⁴³ London also recognised the long term impact the informal discussion could have. FitzGerald was expected to remain as Taoiseach for a long time in comparison to the short tenures of the past few years. To agree to his request could yield positive results.⁴⁴ Consequently, the meeting on 22 March was extended to ninety minutes.⁴⁵

During the conversation FitzGerald shared that ‘he was glad that he was in contact with the Prime Minister and ... hoped it would be possible to strengthen contact in the future.’ London and Dublin’s summaries of the meeting follow the same basic topics, starting with FitzGerald raising security and ending with a discussion on Ministerial contacts. Yet London’s record omits some of the conversation. Whereas London’s record skims over a discussion on the upcoming General Election, Dublin’s summary records a detailed conversation. Thatcher told FitzGerald that she had not yet penned her manifesto and, during a discussion of Irish support in cities like Liverpool and Glasgow, she asked if Armstrong thought that the Scottish Nationalists were responsible for “one of those letter-bombs sent to me”. Dublin was keeping a close eye on the inner workings of Thatcher’s Government and how the British public viewed her.⁴⁶

London’s record shows that Thatcher was reluctant to overshare. She told FitzGerald that, so far as Anglo-Irish meetings went, ‘it was necessary to proceed slowly’ and that she could only agree to one or two private contacts. she also told him that she regarded their relationship as ‘more as a matter of keeping in touch.’⁴⁷ Yet the Dublin summary records that

⁴² TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, FCO 88 to Coles of 18 Mar. 1983.

⁴³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Coles to FCO, 14 Mar. 1983.

⁴⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Coles 71 to FCO of 14 Mar. 1983. The Irish side prepared a 13-page brief for FitzGerald that outlined the impact Haughey’s relations with MT could have on his relationship with her and how best to handle her. See NAI, TAOIS 2013/100/1101, brief for meeting with MT, 21-22 Mar. 1983.

⁴⁵ CAC, THCR 6/1/2/5, MT Engagement Diary, 22 Mar. 1983.

⁴⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2013/100/1050, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, 22 Mar. 1983.

⁴⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, record of conversation, 22 Mar. 1983.

Thatcher said that ‘it was obviously to the advantage of both parties to keep in touch.’⁴⁸ Why are the two records different? Thatcher’s team would circulate the summary to inform the ministers who were not there what had been discussed. Therefore, it was important to show that Thatcher had adopted a stand-off approach to FitzGerald, in keeping with the instructions she had received through the pre-summit briefings.⁴⁹ Thatcher was also dismissive of the NIF initiative, which FitzGerald had sold as a means of helping the SDLP. The establishment of the NIF would be “very damaging” for relations with unionists. It would revive Unionist fears of the Council of Ireland arrangement which had destabilised Sunningdale.⁵⁰ The SDLP were FitzGerald’s “problem”. She did not want to see Sinn Féin become more popular, but the SDLP were anti-Unionist, and ‘that was her problem’ with them.⁵¹ She was disappointed that they had boycotted the new Stormont assembly. Thatcher left FitzGerald in no doubt of her wariness towards him and the Irish. FitzGerald later described the meeting as ‘cool enough,’ but the meeting was significant because Anglo-Irish dialogue had been re-established.⁵²

Jim Prior wrote to Thatcher in April 1983 that he saw little sign of movement in Northern Ireland. He remained committed to the Northern Ireland Assembly and did not want to ‘promise any new and dramatic initiatives. To do so would raise false expectations which are bound to be disappointed to our discredit. We have a good foundation in the Assembly and the 1982 Act.’ He suggested a way forward might be rolling devolution with the four spending departments devolved to each of the parties. This ‘would avoid the difficulties of collective power sharing, and if accepted, would meet the criteria of widespread acceptance.’ Thatcher queried whether this was acceptable as it would not have cross party support.⁵³ Prior, in a reply, conceded that ‘widespread community support’ remained the fundamental requirement without which devolution cannot be carried out.’ Prior singled out Haughey’s activities as one key roadblock.⁵⁴ After the election, Prior suggested pressurising the Irish

⁴⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2013/100/1050, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, 22 Mar. 1983.

⁴⁹ See TNA UK, PREM 19/1070.

⁵⁰ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 471.

⁵¹ NAI, TAOIS 2013/100/1050, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, 22 Mar. 1983.

⁵² FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 471.

⁵³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, Jim Prior to MT, 28 Apr. 1983.

⁵⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, J.M. Lyon (NIO) to John Coles (PM’s Office), 11 May 1983.

government to get the SDLP to take up seats in the Assembly might be a good strategy. To him, something had to be done,

The Prime Minister asked whether it was Mr. Prior's basic concern that because the supporters of violence were going to win, we should organise a tactical withdrawal. Mr Prior said that this was not his view ... This would be utterly wrong. He was absolutely convinced that withdrawal would mean civil war. His main point was that he believed it would be a mistake to do nothing for five years.

Thatcher 'expressed doubt as to whether we could solve the Northern Ireland problem' but could only act as a catalyst for the people there to come to a resolution. Prior agreed but warned that the 'key was to achieve relations with Dublin which were sufficiently good for Dublin to be persuaded to put pressure on the SDLP'.⁵⁵ One striking development arose from the meeting. Prior agreed to send Thatcher a reading list concerning Northern Ireland, including books by F.S.L. Lyons and Dervla Murphy.⁵⁶

FitzGerald and Thatcher met again at the EEC in Stuttgart on 16 June 1983. FitzGerald had a problem - the 'Dowra' affair (see chapter 3). From Dublin's record, it appears Thatcher had not been briefed on this development, as she asked her team to take note of FitzGerald's concern so that the matter could be examined.⁵⁷ London's summary paints a different picture. It notes that FitzGerald felt there 'had recently been very effective cooperation between the respective police authorities on a matter of serious concern'.⁵⁸ But cooperation would be stalled by the Dowra affair. Although a Police Consultative Council had been founded a few years ago, it had fallen into disuse under Haughey. FitzGerald wondered if Thatcher could help with re-establishing the Council, as 'the authorities in the Republic had clear evidence of collusion.' Thatcher felt that it was the wrong time to revive the Council, and this is what she asked Armstrong to note down for further investigation.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, John Coles to J.M. Lyon (NIO), 16 May 1983.

⁵⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1068, D.A. Hill (NIO) to John Coles, (PM's Office) 8 July 1983. MT had last requested a reading list in 1980. See TNA UK, PREM 19/498.

⁵⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2013/100/1088, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, 19 June 1983.

⁵⁸ The 'matter' is not detailed in the records from Dublin or London.

⁵⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, No. 10 record of conversation, 19 June 1983. The Dowra affair stalled meetings between the RUC and the Garda for three years. See Eunan O'Halpin, 'Anglo-Irish Security Co-operation: A Dublin Perspective,' *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1990), pp. 5-24.

FitzGerald's focus remained on the NIF, but he had to get past Thatcher's 'Fortress Falklands nationalism.'⁶⁰

Tentative Irish Initiatives

After Thatcher's landslide election victory in June 1983, a formal summit meeting with the Taoiseach was on the agenda. Thatcher was sceptical about its value. She noted on a memo that 'we haven't anything to talk about save security and EEC' and that 'no amount of talks about new committees can conceal that fact.'⁶¹

Noonan made an important speech in September 1983 where he declared that the challenge for the British and Irish governments was to find 'a workable arrangement' that would 'give to the people of Northern Ireland what they want and what they need.' It was a requirement that 'Irish nationalists must accommodate the unionist identity and *vice versa*.' *The Times* commented that the speech's refreshing directness showed that there was hope for the NIF.⁶² Also in September, David Goodall met with Michael Lillis. Lillis floated some tentative ideas. The 'overriding objective from the Republic's point of view (and that of the SDLP) ... was not unification, but the restoration of stability in Northern Ireland before the SDLP were eclipsed by Sinn Féin and the consequent unrest in the North infected the whole of Ireland.' In return for recognising Northern Ireland, and accepting the return of Stormont, the Irish security forces would participate in security operations in Northern Ireland. Goodall acknowledged that the recognition of Northern Ireland 'would constitute an important shift in the position of the Irish government and the SDLP.' Armstrong remained 'profoundly sceptical' about the proposition, which he suggested was politically. That being said, he saw the package suggested by Lillis as potentially leading to something that could produce 'significant political advantage.'⁶³ Thatcher replied that Goodall should seek further clarification.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, record of conversation between MT and FitzGerald at Stuttgart, 19 June 1983, NAI, DFA 2013/27/1471, brief for meeting with MT, 14 June 1983.

⁶¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Armstrong minute to MT, 8 July 1983.

⁶² *The Times*, 19 Sept. 1983.

⁶³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069, Armstrong to MT, 21 Sept. 1983. The Dublin's record of the meeting can be found in NAI, DFA 2013/27/1589.

⁶⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069, Coles to Armstrong, 22 Sept. 1983.

Goodall, in his follow up meeting with Lillis, made clear that London had no interest in any Irish proposals for joint sovereignty, which much press coverage seemed to be pointing towards. Lillis said joint sovereignty had received much attention in the Forum because there were intimations that this was acceptable to London as a possible long term solution. Goodall said that such a concept would not be entertained by the British government. There was then a discussion of Irish involvement in law and order in the Northern Ireland. Goodall warned that the ideas did not seem fully formed and might make things worse. Lillis responded that Dublin was aware of the risks and wished to proceed ‘cautiously and slowly.’ He also said that the Forum was going to produce a series of alternative proposals but its ‘most important function would be to lower the level of public expectation in the Republic about unification’ and allow the creation of a climate in which something along the lines of the previous proposals could be launched. Goodall agreed this was ‘sensible and realistic.’⁶⁵

Armstrong, in his note to Thatcher, felt that the amendment of the Irish constitution, in return for Irish participation in law and order in Northern Ireland, was a high price. He believed that dialogue should be maintained. He proposed a team of senior officials to look at the Irish proposals when they were fleshed out.⁶⁶ Thatcher was not convinced. She warned that the Irish initiative could lead to more violence.⁶⁷ Even worse, while John Hume endorsed the idea of an Irish police presence and an acceptance of Stormont, he was dismissive of constitutional change. He suggested that Lillis had misrepresented his party’s position when he held discussions with Jim Prior.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Armstrong prepped Thatcher for her upcoming meeting with FitzGerald.

Armstrong advised Thatcher to ‘listen sympathetically to what FitzGerald has to say; probe him on the realism of his approach; and, while striking a strongly sceptical note, make it clear that you would be prepared to look at any practical and realistic ideas which might help to reduce the level of violence in Northern Ireland.’⁶⁹ London was also concerned by

⁶⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069 Goodall to Armstrong, 30 Sept. 1983. The Dublin’s record of the meeting can be found in NAI, DFA 2013/27/1589.

⁶⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069 Armstrong to MT, 3 Oct. 1983.

⁶⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069 Coles to Armstrong, 7 Oct. 1983.

⁶⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069 Prior to MT, 11 Oct. 1983.

⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069, Armstrong to MT, 3 Nov. 1983.

FitzGerald's request 'for a period of time *en tête-à-tête* with the Prime Minister without colleagues, advisors or note-takers' as he was known for being 'a very rapid and indistinct talker, and not always an attentive listener.' Armstrong admitted that he was concerned that FitzGerald would leave the meeting 'with some misconception of what the Prime Minister had said.'⁷⁰

Privately, Dublin was unsure of how to present their ideas to Thatcher. 'Do we or do we not insist on maintaining all our nationalist cards face up on the table during that time?'⁷¹ They were also concerned by Thatcher's attitude, 'we are told that she has a conviction, reinforced in recent years, that every effort of Government to resolve the crisis, only made it worse.' FitzGerald would have to convince Thatcher that they both had a pivotal role to play. Irish Cabinet Advisors, aware of FitzGerald's habit of making prolonged speeches, warned him that 'in dealing with Thatcher it is advisable to be concrete rather than theoretical.'⁷² FitzGerald could channel his fast-paced dialogue into his new initiative. In a press interview before the summit, FitzGerald stated that the two governments had 'different view points, but we both have responsibilities to try to resolve this problem and restore peace and stability to Ireland.'⁷³

According to FitzGerald's account, the meeting did not go particularly well. Thatcher refused to discuss joint sovereignty as she feared having to answer questions on the matter in parliament. (Brian Walden, television presenter and admirer of Thatcher, had just presented a programme on that very question, though 'FitzGerald made clear that he had received no briefings from Irish officials'). The plenary session which involved Dick Spring, Peter Barry, Geoffrey Howe and Jim Prior saw a more expansive discussion which covered proposals for joint security coordination, constitutional change in the republic and a political layer. However, it was to be many months before that London was willing to take risks and launch a new political initiative.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, Armstrong briefing for Coles, 28 Oct. 1983.

⁷¹ NAI, DFA 1014/32/2033, briefing note for FitzGerald, undated.

⁷² *iBid.*,

⁷³ BUFVCD, 'FitzGerald on upcoming Northern Ireland summit,' 24 Oct. 1983.

⁷⁴ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 476-78.

Alan Goodison, who had been appointed Ambassador to Ireland in July 1983, sent an impressionistic, somewhat condescending, account of Irish attitudes to Northern Ireland. It was all rather bleak. (Though he enjoyed the confidence of FitzGerald). Thatcher, as was her style, underlined considerable portions that interested her. He concluded that many in the 'south wanted nothing to with the North' but believed in nationalist myths. The unionist position was 'not generally understood.' Northern Catholics were seen as victims and there was a level of tolerance for Sinn Féin that alarmed Dublin. Dublin believed that the key to combating alienation of the minority was to give legitimacy to the security forces.⁷⁵ Goodwin concluded,

So, as the people in the Republic contemplate the problems of Northern Ireland, Dr. FitzGerald and his friends are feeling desperate. They see no obvious answer to Ireland's problems. But precisely because the Unionists are so intransigent, the logic of the nationalist myth is that only Britain can produce the basis for a solution, by withdrawing the guarantee and obliging the Unionists to reach an agreement with the South. If only - the reasoning goes - HMG were more interested. If only the British knew more about Ireland. Then perhaps the British could find the solution itself. They think that if they press us hard enough - and they don't even know how to do that - we shall tell them what the answer is. I do not believe we know what the answer is either.⁷⁶

A March 1984 report of the British Joint Intelligence Committee warned that the strategy of the Provisionals remained that 'of forcing the withdrawal of the British from Northern Ireland by means of a dual strategy involving both political action and terrorism, and thereafter bringing about a new "socialist republic" of all Ireland.' Until the breakout from the Maze in November, the campaign in 1983 had, due to repeated security force successes, reduced popular PIRA support. The major concern now was the significant electoral advance of Sinn Féin. They wanted to take more than half of the nationalist vote at the 1985 local elections. The growth of Sinn Féin in the Republic of Ireland, most likely at the expense of Fianna Fáil, could lead them to intimidate the government.⁷⁷ Lillis also advised London that Sinn Féin's

⁷⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069, Alan Goodison to Geoffrey Howe, The Irish Question: First Impressions from the Republic of Ireland, 13 Dec. 1983.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1285, 'The Strategy of the Provisionals,' 9 Feb. 1984.

move to contest the 1985 elections was purely tactical. Haughey and Fianna Fáil could not reject the right of Sinn Féin to be the political party of the minority in the North. Goodall made clear that until Sinn Féin renounced violence there would be no talks.⁷⁸

The New Ireland Forum

The sessions of the NIF began in September 1983. The NIF was based on a concept Hume had presented to FitzGerald for a nationalist Council for a New Ireland. FitzGerald expanded on this idea and organised an all Ireland Forum that was open to all parties.⁷⁹ 'The origins of the (NIF) date back to the autumn of 1982 and the rise of Sinn Féin as a political force in Northern Ireland.'⁸⁰ The Forum, then, sought to counter the emergence of Sinn Féin as a viable political party by shoring up the SDLP, the moderate Nationalist party, in Northern Ireland. The Forum also served as a platform to present the SDLP as a viable Nationalist party to the Thatcher Government, 'The SDLP's problem was that its moderation appeared to win no favour from the British government, which refused steadfastly to upset the unionist majority.'⁸¹ The unionist parties and Alliance abstained, while Sinn Féin were not permitted to join. The Forum was made up of four leaders from the main nationalist parties; Haughey, Fianna Fáil, FitzGerald, Fine Gael, Dick Spring, Labour, and Hume, SDLP.

FitzGerald was anxious that the Forum report would set out a number of models for future solutions to the Northern Ireland problem. He was particularly interested in ensuring his model - joint sovereignty - was not rejected by Fianna Fáil, who might wish to deflect the Forum down more nationalist lines.⁸² Throughout the whole period of the NIF, keeping Fianna Fáil on board meant that FitzGerald had to be cautious. He told Thatcher in January 1984 that the NIF report would have to take account of the views of Haughey. Michael Lillis explained that the report would contain three sections: the first would assess the attitudes of all parties to the problem; the second would 'identify a number of principles or criteria which any settlement of the problem must satisfy'; the final part would examine possible models

⁷⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1285, note from Goodall to Armstrong, 24 Jan. 1984.

⁷⁹ FitzGerald, 'Origins and rationale of 1985 agreement,' in *Northern Ireland and the Politics of Reconciliation*, ed., by Dermot Keogh and Michael H. Haltzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 194.

⁸⁰ Kelly, *A Failed Political Entity*, p. 98.

⁸¹ Marc Mulholland, 'Just Another Country,' p. 201.

⁸² FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 470.

for a solution. These models, Lillis emphasised, were ‘strictly illustrative’ but would probably be ‘a unitary state; a federal or confederal state; and some form of cooperation or joint administration in Northern Ireland.’ Lillis asked if a report presented in this form would present difficulties in London. Goodall replied that the outline seemed sensible but he was worried that Haughey would emphasise the unitary state solution. Lillis agreed that there was a risk but said the SDLP would be against it. Overall, Goodall was sceptical. Lillis promised that London would get an advance copy of the report.

On 4 February, FitzGerald told Nicholas Scott, Minister of State for Northern Ireland, that the Forum was proceeding well and a list of principles had been agreed.⁸³ The list would be ‘acceptable to HMG’ and took account of unionist positions.⁸⁴ A draft of the Forum report was passed to Goodall by Lillis with instructions that the document should only be seen by the Prime Minister. Lillis added that FitzGerald was looking forward to starting serious dialogue with London when they were ready. Goodall asked for the advance copy of the report to be shown to Thatcher.⁸⁵ Hume, in a meeting with Thatcher, explained that the SDLP had to boycott the Northern Ireland assembly as the Protestant community had ‘resolutely and unmovably’ set their views against power sharing. This was why the work of the Forum was so important.⁸⁶

A meeting of senior ministers and officials from London on 6 January 1984 agreed that ‘a political initiative on Northern Ireland was desirable which, by helping to isolate and neutralise the terrorists and their supporters, would promote law and order in the province’ and allow the government to respond effectively to any new proposals. The problem was that this was likely to ‘evoke strong unionist opposition.’ As far as London was concerned a ‘crucial precondition’ was Dublin’s ‘willingness and ability to waive the territorial claim to the North.’ In return, London would consider joint policing and joint law enforcement in Northern Ireland. Thatcher agreed that, in advance of the Forum report, exploratory talks

⁸³ Sir Nicholas Scott, Conservative MP 1966-1997. Education Under-Secretary of the NIO 1981-1986, Minister of State for Northern Ireland 1986-1987.

⁸⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1285, Dublin 5 of 6 Feb. 1984

⁸⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1285 Goodall to Armstrong, 6 Feb. 1984

⁸⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1285, Allison note of meeting between Hume and MT, 10 Feb. 1984.

with Dublin should begin.⁸⁷ Dublin was somewhat surprised by this. Lillis told Armstrong that Irish ideas were not much advanced beyond what had been floated tentatively the previous autumn. Nonetheless, he was glad that Thatcher was taking political progress seriously. Lillis also said that Dublin was pursuing the idea of joint authority, which was not as dangerous a word for unionism as joint sovereignty. However, he also said that joint policing was unlikely to work unless there was joint authority. They were also unhappy with London's proposal for a border security zone on the Republic's side.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Haughey had lost none of his vitriol against Thatcher or what he called the appeasement of the British government.

In an outburst in the Dáil in March 1984, he lambasted FitzGerald,

Will you never learn? Will you understand that no matter what soft words or protestations are used, the age-old reality prevails? Britain relentlessly and remorselessly pursues Britain's self interest, no matter whom it hurts or affects ... Ireland's interests are best defended by Irish men and women and all the appeasement and platitudes and honeyed words mean nothing when the chips are down.⁸⁹

J.J. O'Molloy, a political commentator, concluded that any 'lingering hopes' that FitzGerald had for the New Ireland Forum 'surely died then.' The NIF report would 'eventually reflect this collapse of a bipartisan Irish approach to the Northern problem.'⁹⁰

The report was scheduled for publication on 2 May 1984. Goodison received an advance copy of a late draft. Prior was disappointed with the report. He told Thatcher that it was 'rhetorical and thin on practicalities.' Moreover, he felt the 'green' passages had not balanced by a clear recognition of 'obstacles to Irish unity.' The report was substantively in the 'Fianna Fáil tradition.' While there were elements that showed some movement in nationalist opinion, there was 'no unequivocal statement' about majority consent. He acknowledged that a balance had to be found between rejecting the report and increasing

⁸⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1275, Northern Ireland - Draft Note for the Record.

⁸⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1275, Goodall to Armstrong, Anglo-Irish relations; Northern Ireland, 6 Mar. 1984 and Armstrong to MT, 7 Mar. 1984.

⁸⁹ Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, pp. 821-822.

⁹⁰ *Sunday Tribune*, 25 Mar. 1984

difficulties for the Irish.⁹¹ Writing to Thatcher to inform her of the Forum's work, FitzGerald told her,

The Report is an important event in the political development of this State and for our relations with you and indeed with Northern Ireland. I believe that it marks a consolidation by the four main voices of constitutional nationalists in Ireland, speaking together, of important principles which we hold in common with you, and moreover, that it marks a seminal advance in the acceptance by Irish Nationalists of the rights and the ethos of the Unionists of Northern Ireland.⁹²

FitzGerald secretly sent Thatcher an advance copy of the report, taking a great risk as he had not consulted with the other Forum members. Understandably he was 'very anxious that we should on no account disclose that he has passed an advance copy to you.' The move appears to be a grand show of trust in Thatcher, to flatter her even. The feeling at the time was that the 'Irish wish to keep the British side in play while they did their own homework.'⁹³ The report aimed to dispel the nationalist myth that responsibility for Northern Ireland lay with Britain alone because 'many in the South want to have nothing to do with the North.'⁹⁴ The paper stated that 'a united Ireland in the form of a sovereign independent Irish state (could only be achieved) peacefully and by consent,' this being 'the best and most durable basis for peace and stability.'⁹⁵ It was hoped that the NIF would 'herald a new beginning for all who have been cruelly disappointed by past failures.'⁹⁶ The report set out three options for the future of Northern Ireland; unity with Ireland; a federal arrangement; joint authority shared between Ireland and Britain.⁹⁷ Prior had already presaged London's disappointment with the report. Thatcher assembled the small group of officials to look at it.⁹⁸ Fundamentally, one British analysis considered the reports reading of the history of Northern Ireland as 'unsatisfactory' because 'although it acknowledges that Irish unity can only be achieved by consent, it fails to tackle the fact that such consent will not be forthcoming for the foreseeable

⁹¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, Jim Prior to MT, 26 Apr. 1984. See also his similar note of 1 May 1984.

⁹² TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, letter from FitzGerald to MT, 27 Apr. 1984.

⁹³ TNA UK, CAB 128/8, minutes of full Cabinet, 8 Mar. 1984, TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, minute to MT, 27 Apr. 1984.

⁹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1069, UK Ambassador Dublin to Howe, 13 Dec. 1983.

⁹⁵ New Ireland Forum Report (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1984).

⁹⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/801, statement by Dr. Colm O hEocha, Chairman of the NIF, Dublin Castle, 2 May 1984.

⁹⁷ New Ireland Forum Report.

⁹⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, Flesher (PM's Office) to John Lyon, (NIO), 30 Apr. 1984.

future.’⁹⁹ London accepted that this was because ‘it (represented) the highest common factor of agreement among the four political parties involved in the Forum.’¹⁰⁰ London concluded that the proposals were ‘fraught with difficulties, and cannot as they stand be regarded as providing an acceptable way forward.’¹⁰¹ Although Dublin wanted Thatcher to ‘say very little and leave (them) to make the running,’ a formal response would have to be made.¹⁰²

The Forum report appears to have provided little in the way of substance for the secret discussions between senior officials. Dublin’s proposals to recognise Northern Ireland and London’s proposals for enhanced security cooperation were the main subject at talks between Armstrong and Nally. FitzGerald’s team pointed out the difficulties of amending the constitution to remove Articles two and three but suggested that they could register the proposed agreement with the UN. Dublin felt that London’s approach was ‘too narrowly focussed on security.’ The Irish proposals for joint authority were outlined by Nally. Sovereignty, defence, foreign affairs and finance would remain with the UK but on all other matters, ‘public authority in the province would be vested in a joint authority comprising a Minister appointed by each government for the purpose.’ Armstrong raised numerous objections - most notably who would have the casting vote on contentious issues. They also suggested that the powers for joint authority would impinge on sovereignty particularly over security. Armstrong felt that London would have to decide whether they wanted to continue the discussions with them, or seek an internal settlement.¹⁰³ Prior was supportive of continuing to probe for a political solution as the other alternatives were not good.¹⁰⁴

Following the summit with Dublin, Armstrong briefed Thatcher on three possible responses to the NIF report; ‘to decide that no form of Irish political presence ... in Northern Ireland would be tolerable, and to disengage from conversations with the Irish Government’ or ‘to decide that an Irish political presence, however diluted or “consultative” ... would be tolerable; and to explore further in the Armstrong-Nally forum the possibility of reaching

⁹⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, analysis of the Forum Report, 23 May 1984.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, minute from Armstrong to MT, 23 May 1984.

¹⁰² TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, minute from Prior to MT, 1 May 1984. TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, memo of a conversation with Prior by Utley, 28 May 1984.

¹⁰³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, Armstrong to MT, 14 May 1984.

¹⁰⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, Prior to MT, 22 May 1984.

agreement on that basis.¹⁰⁵ Another idea was for London to launch an independent initiative to overshadow the NIF.¹⁰⁶ Prior warned Peter Barry in early June that Thatcher's first impressions of the talks and the forum were not encouraging. A wide range of measures might be possible in Northern Ireland if the Irish side would amend Articles two and three of their constitution. Dublin responded that they would be willing to do so in return for a 'substantial *quid pro quo*' from London.¹⁰⁷ In response to the suggestions, and amid mounting pressure for a response from Thatcher, Sir Philip Woodfield was commissioned to conduct research into ways in which the Irish Government could be given association with the political administration of Northern Ireland, without compromising British sovereignty.¹⁰⁸

Included in these papers are sketches by Dr. Paul Compton of Queen's University, who attempted to re-draw the border in a way that 'would produce a more homogeneous population in Northern Ireland.' Compton suggested reducing the size of Northern Ireland by almost half in order to allow around 500,000 Catholic residents to join the Irish Republic.¹⁰⁹ The Compton report also discussed the possibility of dividing Belfast 'in the style of Berlin with perhaps a corridor and a wall.'¹¹⁰ Jim Prior advised against repartition. He felt it should only be used as a 'draconian' measure in the event of civil war.' Prior did not think, however, that the NIF proposals for joint authority were acceptable either. The best option was a consultative role for the Republic of Ireland, offering influence rather than shared authority.¹¹¹ On 21 June, Thatcher held another meeting to discuss Northern Ireland with her senior ministers and advisers.

Thatcher agreed that Ministerial level meetings should continue. She would avoid constitutional matters when she met FitzGerald. Thatcher even pointed out to him that a failed

¹⁰⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, Armstrong to MT, 23 May 1984.

¹⁰⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, draft note for record, Cabinet Office, 24 May 1984.

¹⁰⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, Goodall to Coles, 31 May 1984.

¹⁰⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, minute from Armstrong to MT, 12 June 1984.

¹⁰⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, drawings by Dr. Compton depicting possible border boundaries and the segregation of Belfast after repartition, 18 June 1984. According to CAIN, in November 1984 *The Sunday Press* revealed that MT had asked for reports on repartition to be produced. Whether they were referring to Woodfield and/or Compton's report is unknown.

¹¹⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, minute from the NIO to MT, 6 June 1984.

¹¹¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1286, minute from Prior to MT, 18 June 1984.

referendum could make things worse.¹¹² Prior took a moderate course in the Common's debate which drew brickbats and praise in the Irish media. *The Irish Press* and Haughey were notably hostile. The British embassy in Dublin assessed that Haughey was frightened that FitzGerald would achieve a deal with Thatcher and this would split Fianna Fáil.¹¹³ However, London was adamant that Dublin's proposals for joint authority, as presented by Nally, were unworkable.

Armstrong, in meetings in Dublin, made clear that the responsibility for decisions on Northern Ireland would rest with the British government even if the Irish government was granted a significant role ('formalised or institutionalised cooperation'). It was not what Dublin wanted but they indicated that they might be willing to accept it provided it was institutionalised and there was a resident Irish government representative in Northern Ireland. Armstrong considered the talks had moved 'the dialogue on to a more realistic basis.'¹¹⁴ Dorr was concerned that Prior had a different agenda than Armstrong and Thatcher. He seemed more interested in getting devolution going again.¹¹⁵ Dorr's references to Joint authority, in turn, concerned Thatcher who asked that further efforts be made to disabuse him of this being an option.¹¹⁶ The Dublin side returned to the issue in further consultation between Nally and Armstrong.

Nally said London's proposals were inadequate. They would not be enough to end Catholic alienation. Moreover, it would not be significant enough to allow a referendum on Articles two and three to take place with any chance of success. They also warned that the RUC was not likely, in its present form, to be acceptable and suggested a tripartite policing solution to Northern Ireland with nationalist areas patrolled by a mainly unarmed Catholic force, and *vice versa* for the unionist areas. London pointed to the grave difficulties in setting up such a force. Armstrong felt that Dublin could be talked round.¹¹⁷ Peter Barry told journalists that Dublin hoped that the next Anglo-Irish summit would be a major step forward

¹¹² FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 500-01.

¹¹³ *The Irish Press*, 3 July 1984. TNA UK, PREM 19/1287, Dublin 311 of 4 July 1984.

¹¹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1287, Armstrong to MT, 19 July 1984. Dublin's record of the meeting is kept in TAOIS 2014/105/825.

¹¹⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1287, R J Andrew minute, 20 July 1984.

¹¹⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1287, Powell minute, 28 July 1984.

¹¹⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1287, Armstrong minute, 3 Aug. 1984.

and that Thatcher and her team now had a sense that the Northern Ireland question was a priority.¹¹⁸

Prior, who was about to move on from Northern Ireland, sent a lengthy paper at the end of September to Douglas Hurd, his successor, and Thatcher. He painted a fairly bleak picture of the Northern Ireland situation. He urged the continuation of talks with Dublin as ‘there are clearly considerable advantages to be had from a bold departure in Anglo-Irish relations as long as it is not seen by the Unionists to be designed to lead ineluctably to a united Ireland.’ He concluded that,

... if any substantial progress is to be made it will require your personal involvement. You, more than any other British politician, are trusted by the Unionists as being rock solid on the question of Northern Ireland’s position within the United Kingdom. If unpalatable things are to be imposed upon the majority it can only be done using your personal authority.¹¹⁹

A draft response was written during a meeting of the AIIGC between the 18 and 19 of October at Chequers. Thatcher and FitzGerald agreed that political violence must be unanimously condemned; both community identities should be ‘recognised and respected’ and the government of Northern Ireland should reflect both traditions, instilling ‘both communities with the confidence that their rights will be safeguarded.’¹²⁰ Although the statement repeated what had been said before, it was now formally agreed that the key to solving the Northern Ireland issue lay in stable Anglo-Irish co-operation. Conversations between them would lead to better understanding of each other’s position. Following a further meeting in September, Geoffrey Howe commented ‘there has been a marked increase of realism and lowering of expectations on the Irish side since your conversation with the Taoiseach.’¹²¹ Armstrong advised Thatcher that she faced a paradox, ‘the political case for continuing the process remains the same as the case for embarking upon it ... we cannot

¹¹⁸ *The Irish Times*, 28 Aug. 1984.

¹¹⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1287, Prior minute to MT, 19 Sept. 1984

¹²⁰ CAC, THCR 1/10/14, draft *communiqué*, 19 Oct. 1984.

¹²¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1288, Howe minute to MT, 23 Oct. 1984. Geoffrey Howe, Baron Howe of Aberavon, Conservative MP 1964-1966, 1970-1992. Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1979-1983, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1983-1989, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House of Commons, 1989-1990.

afford to do nothing, and that the risks of doing nothing are as great as or greater than the risks that would be attendant upon an agreed package.¹²² Thatcher told reporters that she looked ‘forward to continued contact with Dr. FitzGerald and his Government on matters of mutual concern’ and that the ‘Irish Government has a legitimate interest in the situation in Northern Ireland (so) we try to keep them in touch with our thinking.’¹²³ FitzGerald’s gentle perseverance appeared to be paying off. Only two years previously Thatcher had noted that she had wanted no more meetings between herself and Haughey to occur.¹²⁴ Anglo-Irish relations appeared to be thawing.

Public and political opinion on the situation in Northern Ireland were beginning to dovetail. *The Times* asked if a committee of MEPs from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and the UK could be established to ‘put forward major schemes for economical and social development’ so that future agreements would not collapse in the way Sunningdale had.¹²⁵ *The Irish Times* reported that almost every paper agreed that the situation in Northern Ireland required concentrated attention as it was in danger of deteriorating further.¹²⁶ ‘(FitzGerald) strongly endorsed the Prime Minister’s view that it would be dangerous to do nothing; and he shared her wish that the two governments should join in the process of finding a way to bring peace to Northern Ireland and should act together in the matter.’¹²⁷ However, things were to take a dramatic and unexpected turn.

Brighton and ‘out out out’

The progress made by the teams from Dublin and London since FitzGerald’s return to office was challenged by events in Brighton in October 1984. During the Conservative Party Conference at the Grand Hotel, the PIRA detonated a bomb. It failed to kill Thatcher, its primary target, but caused five fatalities and left others with life changing injuries. Historians debate whether the bomb had any marked affect on Anglo-Irish relations and the peace process. McKivvit and McVea argue that although the bomb sent ‘shockwaves’ through

¹²² TNA UK, PREM 19/1288, Armstrong minute to MT, 1 Nov. 1984.

¹²³ *The Irish Times*, 4 May 1984.

¹²⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1070, letter from Armstrong to Cole, 6 Aug. 1982.

¹²⁵ *The Times*, 4 May 1984.

¹²⁶ *The Irish Times*, 4 May 1984.

¹²⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1285, memo from Armstrong to MT.

Britain and Ireland, ‘the long, careful Anglo-Irish negotiations kept inching painstakingly forward.’¹²⁸ Kennedy-Pipe ventured that when Thatcher stated that she ‘was not going to be bombed to the negotiating table,’ the tone for the next two years of negotiations was negatively set.¹²⁹

Later recollections of the event by Thatcher prove that the experience did personally affect her. During an interview, she recollected a touching moment during a Church service,

The sun was just coming through the stained glass window and falling on some flowers right across the church and it occurred to me that this was the day I was not meant to see, and then all of a sudden, I thought: “There are some of my dearest friends who are not seeing this day”.¹³⁰

Armstrong told Thatcher that FitzGerald was ‘wildly over-optimistic’ about the speed of their impending negotiations and that cabinet was ‘in a different world following the Brighton Bomb and must proceed more slowly.’¹³¹ FitzGerald did not fully comprehend how seriously the bomb had affected Thatcher. It was the first direct action taken by the PIRA to end her life and, in the hours after, the group released a chilling statement; ‘today we were unlucky, but remember we only have to be lucky once - you will have to be always lucky.’¹³² Thatcher noted on a memo that ““The bomb” has slowed things down and may in the end kill any new initiative because I suspect it will be the first of a series.’¹³³

There was a notable hardening of British attitudes. In exchanges with Nally, Armstrong suggested that devolution with safeguards was the best possible basis for an agreement. An Irish speaking note, which also indicated a hardening of the position in Dublin, raised British ire. Goodison warned that the November summit occupied ‘a vital place in [FitzGerald’s] priorities. Whilst failure would not bring down his Government, it could seriously damage his credibility ... Dr. FitzGerald cannot afford to come away from

¹²⁸ David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of The Troubles: The Story of the Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), p. 162.

¹²⁹ Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *The Origins of the Present Troubles in Northern Ireland* (New York: Longman, 1997).

¹³⁰ MTF, COI transcript, TV Interview for Channel 4, 15 Oct. 1984.

¹³¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1288, Armstrong minute to Powell, 18 Oct. 1984.

¹³² *The Telegraph*, 8 Apr. 2013.

¹³³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1288, Powell minute to MT, 18 Oct. 1984.

the summit empty handed.’ FitzGerald’s precarious position was lost on Thatcher who noted in the margin ‘that is not my problem.’¹³⁴ John Cole, BBC political editor, wrote ‘if one believes the voices in Whitehall, the Irish Forum report is flatulent and irrelevant, but London needs to behave diplomatically to maintain at least present levels of security cooperation from the republic.’¹³⁵ The Fianna Fáil supporting *The Irish Press*, which began its editorial called ‘Outlook Gloomy,’ was scathing. It believed that the NIF had been a waste of time. Dublin was seen by London as providing security ‘to help maintain Britain’s holding.’ They had no intention of meeting any Irish requests regarding sovereignty or involvement in Northern Ireland. Consequently, ‘Constitutional Irish nationalism is at present waiting in the ante-chamber of the Summit to be shafted yet again.’ It concluded that the Irish government should use extradition and cross-border security as bargaining chips.¹³⁶

The next day, 14 November, Thatcher met with Hurd, Howe, Armstrong, Goodall and Goodison. Thatcher told them that Dublin was making unacceptable demands about joint authority. She had concluded that the risks of the PIRA regarding the breakdown of the inter-governmental talks as a victory would jeopardise security cooperation. Therefore, more modest objectives needed to be presented. Thatcher concluded the meeting by saying that she would respond vigorously to the Irish brief.¹³⁷ Thatcher was about to inflict a profound humiliation on FitzGerald.

FitzGerald travelled to Chequers to meet her on 18 November, and from the outset it was apparent that he faced intense pressure from home. Previous talks were significant to their personal relationship, but the question emerged; did these meetings yield any tangible results? Dublin stated that they didn’t ‘want simply to have talks for the sake of talks’ while Howe commented that ‘if the talks were to continue they could only do so on the basis of the continued shared belief that the efforts would be worthwhile.’ London intended to work on the so termed ‘climate of increased realism’ to pressurise FitzGerald into accepting ‘limited joint arrangements of the kind we have been prepared to offer them in the exploratory talks

¹³⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Dublin 630 to FCO of 12 Nov. 1984. MT underlined part of this sentence to emphasise her point.

¹³⁵ *The Listener*, 13 Nov. 1984.

¹³⁶ *The Irish Press*, 13 Nov. 1984

¹³⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Powell (PM’s Office) to Appleyard (FCO), 14 Nov. 1984.

between our officials.’ London knew this would be difficult, but Thatcher was determined that Dublin should not over-step the mark and ask for more than she could give.¹³⁸ After a ‘heavy night,’ FitzGerald’s team were presented with a speaking note from London over breakfast.¹³⁹ London would not accept any form of joint authority.¹⁴⁰ FitzGerald’s idea was rejected outright, a heavy blow just before his *tête-à-tête* with Thatcher.

The record of conversation shows that FitzGerald and Thatcher had a tense meeting. The tone of their conversation was particularly robust and wholly different to previous encounters. Thatcher commanded the discussion; she quick-fired questions and statements at FitzGerald who retorted concisely.¹⁴¹ When FitzGerald stated that power-sharing in Northern Ireland was the only way that the republican minority would have confidence in their own future. The Northern Ireland problem was about more than basic security. Sinn Féin had the potential to destabilise the political system in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, denying Nationalist’s right to identify as Irish would only further inflame the situation. Thatcher became ‘worried by the trend of the conversation. The Taoiseach seemed to be saying that he wanted a Republican enclave in Northern Ireland.’ Thatcher ‘was obsessed with the idea of creating a purely British enclave in Northern Ireland.’¹⁴² FitzGerald told her that ‘eighty-five thousand Catholics had been driven out of their homes ... All he was seeking was effective policing with which the minority community could identify in the areas where it predominated.’¹⁴³ Contrary to her notation on the pre-summit briefing, Thatcher told FitzGerald ‘We don’t want to cause problems for you back home. We like you. We want to deal with you and not with that other man.’¹⁴⁴ As Mulholland noted, Thatcher was impressed by FitzGerald’s ‘intellectual skill and clearly superior knowledge of the issues at stake.’¹⁴⁵ The meeting was initially reported positively, Armstrong

¹³⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Howe minute to MT, 16 Nov. 1984.

¹³⁹ ‘Endgame in Ireland- Bomb and Ballot Box,’ BBC, 2001.

¹⁴⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/827, statement of British position, Nov. 1984. The original note is referred to, and read from, in ‘Endgame in Ireland- Bomb and Ballot Box,’ BBC 2001.

¹⁴¹ NAI, DFA 2014/32/2059, meeting between FitzGerald and MT in Chequers on 19 Nov. 1984. An identical record of the meeting is kept at NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/776.

¹⁴² Mulholland, ‘Just Another Country,’ p. 203.

¹⁴³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, record of conversation, 19 Nov. 1984.

¹⁴⁴ NAI, DFA 2014/32/2059, meeting between FitzGerald and MT in Chequers on 19 Nov. 1984. ‘... that other man,’ it is safe to presume, being Charles Haughey.

¹⁴⁵ Mulholland, ‘Just Another Country,’ p. 204.

later commented that ‘business appeared to have gone reasonably well.’¹⁴⁶ But Hurd recalled that at one stage, Thatcher ‘... began to compare the Nationalists in the border counties with the Sudeten Germans in 1938; the Taoiseach looked grey and sad. The summit petered out with an empty *communiqué*.’¹⁴⁷ This was the first warning that Thatcher had lost patience with the Irish question.

Thatcher’s infamous ‘out ... out ... out ...’ burst caused palpable damage to the Anglo-Irish relationship. This is the first instance when Thatcher made the blunder. Previous Anglo-Irish diplomatic quarrels occurred due to some inappropriate action (real or perceived) by Dublin. These could be a minor issue, such as the FitzGerald-Thatcher personality clash, or a major issue like Haughey’s *volte face* decision during the Falklands. In this respect, it is the greatest of the Anglo-Irish fall outs because as Roy Jenkins, then President of the EEC remarked, ‘she does have the advantage of being almost totally impervious to how much she offends other people.’¹⁴⁸ But reports had focused on the ‘lowering of expectations’ in Dublin, so were her remarks to be wholly unexpected? Albeit a public press conference was the worst setting to share her comments, but Thatcher was repeating the behind-the-scenes reactions to the report.¹⁴⁹ Thatcher saw the report as a threat to the Unionist majority and to British sovereignty in Northern Ireland. While the Ulster Unionists reacted with ‘glee,’ Thatcher’s speech was reproached in Dublin.¹⁵⁰

It was reported that FitzGerald had ‘agreed to a suggestion that the prime minister’s behaviour at her press conference was “gratuitously offensive” and Mr. Barry is understood to have volunteered that her behaviour was “disgraceful”.’ The remarks leaked to the Irish press and saturated the headlines the following day.¹⁵¹ FitzGerald sent Thatcher a scathing letter in which he pointed out that in his press conference he ‘was extremely careful to avoid creating any difficulties for your position’ and that ‘it would be a tragedy if, through a misunderstanding, an impression were maintained that you totally rejected the essence of the

¹⁴⁶ ‘The AIA: an interview with Sir David Goodall and Lord Armstrong of Ilminster,’ in *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed., by Spencer.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas Hurd, *Memoirs* (London: Little Brown, 2003), pp. 339-340.

¹⁴⁸ Stanislao Pugliese, *The Political Legacy of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Politico Publishing, 2003), p.158.

¹⁴⁹ MTF, press conference following Anglo-Irish summit, No. 12 Downing Street, 19 Nov. 1984.

¹⁵⁰ Mulholland, ‘Just Another Country,’ p. 201.

¹⁵¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Dublin 677 to FCO of 22 Nov. 1984.

Forum Report.’¹⁵² As the *Irish Independent* observed what is surprising about the letter is FitzGerald’s separation from his natural courtesy, ‘the fact that after a long close session of personal talks with Thatcher which he hopes will lead somewhere he sees fit to tell the British Prime Minister what he thinks of her public performance speaks volumes.’¹⁵³

Her offence was three fold. First, her rejection of the NIF, second, her refusal to accept the term ‘alienation’ in relation to the Nationalist minority in Northern Ireland, and third, the tone she used to rebuff the proposal.¹⁵⁴ It was quite unusual that a major Anglo-Irish fall out occurred due ‘not so much about what the prime minister said but more about the manner in which she said it,’ but this was the case.¹⁵⁵ FitzGerald had not been able to listen to Thatcher’s conference due to a bad radio signal, and when one reporter quoted Thatcher’s ‘out out out’ to him, he was visibly shocked. Nally recalled, ‘I was standing at the back of the room and I saw his face drop. It was as if somebody had hit him a blow in the solar plexus.’¹⁵⁶ The blunder really called for a public apology and a retraction of her statement, would the notorious Iron Lady stoop to such public grovelling? No. As Aitken commented ‘she pretended not to understand what the fuss was about.’¹⁵⁷ She also gave this response in a later interview about the damage to Anglo-Irish relations, ‘I am very very sorry that somehow the thing got blown up. I do not know quite why, but these things happen now and then, but they must not affect the real issues.’¹⁵⁸ Cabinet memos from this period bare little evidence of her usual notations and under-linings, and in her autobiography Thatcher concluded that ‘there seemed no point in pretending that these were acceptable approaches

¹⁵² NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/827, letter from FitzGerald to MT, 22 Nov. 1984, TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Armstrong minute to MT, 22 Nov.

¹⁵³ *The Evening Herald*, 22 Nov. 1984.

¹⁵⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Dublin 682 to FCO of 22 Nov. 1984. In the 1980s, the Irish government often used the word ‘alienation’ to describe the minority nationalist community in the north. MT understood this to mirror Karl Marx’s theory of alienation, which indicates the estrangement of a group of people from their roots due to the class system. She had told FitzGerald’s team that the word alienation could not be applied to ‘my people.’ For more on Marx’s theory, please see Paul Thomas, *Alien Politics: Marxist State Theory Retrieved* (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁵⁵ *Fortnight*, 17 Dec. 1984 - 20 Jan. 1985, pp. 5-6. FitzGerald told Goodison that MT’s language had been ‘brutal.’ See NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/827.

¹⁵⁶ Nally interviewed for ‘Endgame in Ireland- Bomb and Ballot Box,’ BBC, 2001.

¹⁵⁷ Aitken, *Thatcher*, p. 418.

¹⁵⁸ MTF, TV Interview for ITN, 4 Dec. 1984.

when they were not.’¹⁵⁹ In the Republic of Ireland, her speech left a feeling of ‘gloom and depression’ in its wake.¹⁶⁰

Dublin warned that relations had been profoundly ‘altered for the worse, in a manner that may be very difficult to recover.’¹⁶¹ There was no doubt that a crisis was beginning, one that FitzGerald feared ‘might not be easily appreciated in London.’¹⁶² His career was under threat. Thatcher’s comments had made a fool of him and he was now in trouble with the Dáil, his party and the Irish public. Public and political opinion agreed that FitzGerald had been ‘subservient to the Prime Minister and (had) failed to achieve anything.’ FitzGerald had been told at a Fine Gael meeting that ‘he was finished as a convincing leader of the party.’ Anglo-Irish relations were at a new low, as was Irish public opinion on Thatcher and FitzGerald, but he was not prepared to give up on the initiative.¹⁶³ He considered that his career was in Thatcher’s hands and was anxious to make amends.¹⁶⁴ He had already expressed his concerns over his leaked comments. As recorded in an official minute, ‘He does not deny that he spoke as reported but is anxious that the Prime Minister should understand that it was at a private meeting and that he had come under very heavy fire indeed from his own party.’¹⁶⁵ Another face-to-face conversation needed to be organised.

The two leaders met again at the EEC summit in Dublin in December. Thatcher was, at first, keen to press on with EEC matters and ignore the Anglo-Irish situation. She noted on a memo to Powell that she would meet FitzGerald ‘if he wishes - but I really think that the less said the better and that such a meeting will raise expectations with the press that cannot be fulfilled. I would rather say that we shall be meeting in the early months of next year ...’¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 400.

¹⁶⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Dublin 677 to FCO, 22 Nov. 1984. See also NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/827, ‘post-Chequers - an alternative strategy,’ 31 Dec. 1984.

¹⁶¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Armstrong minute to MT, *aide memoire*, 22 Nov. 1984. During a meeting with Goodison, Dick Spring, then Tánaiste, outlined the trouble FitzGerald and Fine Gael were in as a result of MT’s press conference. FitzGerald and Michael Noonan, the Irish Minister for Justice, were also present at the meeting. NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/827.

¹⁶² TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Dublin 682 to FCO of 22 Nov. 1984.

¹⁶³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1289, Dublin 705 to FCO of 29 Nov. 1984. In NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/827, ‘post-Chequers - an alternative strategy,’ 31 Dec. 1984, the report states that ‘Four days before we went to Chequers the results of an opinion poll taken in the State showed that our public opinion was ready to contemplate solutions to the Northern Ireland problem which in several major respects fell considerably short of what the British were talking to us about. Four days after Chequers the political judgment was that no deal however good was “saleable”. Little appears’ to have changed since.’

¹⁶⁴ *iBid.*,

¹⁶⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1408/2, Powell minute to MT, 22 Nov. 1984.

¹⁶⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, memo from Powell to MT, 3 Dec. 1984.

She questioned the necessity of sending a pre-summit letter to him, deeming the draft ‘too contrived and too apologetic.’¹⁶⁷ Her defensiveness continued in their discussion. She told FitzGerald that ‘In the Anglo-Irish arena, I am doing everything I can. I have been smiling all day!’ She also attempted to pass some of the blame onto Hume, who she called FitzGerald’s ‘chum.’ ‘(Hume) is not making things easy. He has reacted in such a hostile way in the Commons that I am almost driven to wonder whether there is any point in trying to get a solution to the problem.’¹⁶⁸ When FitzGerald outlined the issues Thatcher’s speech had raised, focusing in particular on her tone, Thatcher rebuffed,

... nothing which she had said at the press conference should have surprised anyone. The Government had made plain many times in recent months that it could not accept the models in the New Ireland Forum report. “Alienation” was a word which she was loth [*sic*] to use for reasons which she had explained at the Summit.¹⁶⁹

In her autobiography, Thatcher reflected on their discussion. She wrote ‘he pleaded that extra sensitivity was needed in what was said after eight hundred years of misunderstanding. I felt at the end I had gained insight into every one of those eight hundred years.’¹⁷⁰ Thatcher was ‘nervous of making any further comment on Irish affairs,’ but FitzGerald convinced her to hold a press conference following their meeting. She told him that ‘she would not want to give the impression of backing down or changing her mind. Depending on the nature of the questions at her press conference and the tone in which they were asked, she would attempt to speak in terms helpful to the Taoiseach.’ She was quizzed on the atmosphere by the press, but remained adamant that there was no problem, ‘as far as I am concerned, there is no rift between myself and Dr. Garret FitzGerald.’ Thatcher also guiltily told a reporter, ‘I am afraid I have a weakness of when people ask me direct questions in press conferences, of giving direct answers. I hope that will not cause you any trouble.’¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, memo from Powell to MT, 27 Nov. 1984. A letter was eventually sent. FitzGerald thanked her for it during their meeting at Dublin Castle. Underline present on original document.

¹⁶⁸ NAI, DFA 2014/32/2059, FitzGerald meeting with MT, 3 Dec. 1984. Lillis reported that MT had noted on a draft letter to FitzGerald that “John Hume had behaved very badly in the House today” and that she was shocked by the tone he had adopted post-out out out. See NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/825.

¹⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, meeting between MT and FitzGerald in Dublin Castle, 3 Dec. 1984.

¹⁷⁰ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 400.

¹⁷¹ MTF, MT press conference after Dublin EEC, 4 Dec. 1984.

Following that press conference, the pressure on FitzGerald was lifted. Moreover, Thatcher continued to improve his political standing by agreeing to more talks in place of an actual apology.¹⁷² Concerns over the level of Irish expectations continued to be discussed, with Thatcher commenting that ‘the Irish want more than we can give and always will. I doubt whether we shall find a way forward.’¹⁷³

Conclusion

This chapter has followed several key themes. First, the Thatcher-FitzGerald dynamic. The beginning of FitzGerald’s second term saw him struggle to repair the damage caused by Haughey. He carefully negotiated with Thatcher, who had surmised that no matter who was Taoiseach, meeting with them was practically pointless. Second, this chapter shows how Thatcher’s own thinking on Northern Ireland was challenged by FitzGerald. He rejected her long-held idea on redrawing the border to move nationalists out of Northern Ireland, and explained to her that nationalists were entitled to identify as Irish. Although Thatcher was ‘unwilling to engage with the unattractive reality that Irish nationalists were inassimilable to British sovereignty,’ FitzGerald persuaded her that Dublin and London needed to work together to bring stability to Northern Ireland. Then, the Brighton bomb happened.

The bomb did not stop Anglo-Irish negotiations, but it did shorten Thatcher’s temper. The third research theme shows how the bomb hardened Thatcher’s attitude. Previously, any major Anglo-Irish fall-out could be blamed on Dublin. Thatcher was left oblivious to what she had done following her notorious ‘out ... out ... out ...’ speech. FitzGerald later surmised that ‘if there were anyone else present she tended to speak for the record and even to some degree to act a role,’ but her outburst caused him serious problems at home.¹⁷⁴ Rather than apologise for her error, Thatcher extended an olive branch to FitzGerald allowing for more discussions. The chapter outlines how the foundations of the AIA were laid.

¹⁷² Aitken, *Thatcher*, p. 418.

¹⁷³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1289, Armstrong minute to Powell, 18 Dec. 1984.

¹⁷⁴ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 476.

Chapter 5

Negotiating the Anglo-Irish Agreement

It was a very difficult thing for (Thatcher) because she was both a very publicly declared and emotional unionist herself, and when she had said earlier that Northern Ireland was as British as Finchley, she meant it.¹

On 15 November 1985, journalists gathered inside Hillsborough Castle, County Down. In front of a large painting of Windsor Castle was a desk, two chairs, and two leather bound folders; one green, one red. Margaret Thatcher, accompanied by Bernard Ingham, Press Secretary, Humphrey Atkins, former Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Geoffrey Howe, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Tom King, the newly appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, entered the room first.² Garret FitzGerald was close behind her along with Dick Spring, Tánaiste, Peter Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Nally, Civil Servant and Peter Prendergast, Press Secretary.³ In stark contrast to the team from Dublin and her colleagues behind her, Thatcher cut a gloomy figure as the AIA was distributed around the room. Outside the gates of the castle, people from the Ulster Unionist parties gathered to protest against the agreement. 15 November 1985 was the culmination of nearly two years of negotiations between London and Dublin. A truly historic Agreement was about to be signed.

In 1984, Dublin and London had started to negotiate via the Armstrong-Nally forum. London was still preoccupied with security while Dublin pushed for an agreement that would appeal to the minority community in Northern Ireland. Thatcher's 'out ... out ... out ...' speech of October 1984 served as a catalyst to the Armstrong-Nally forum. Talks between the two teams increased from January 1985 as the idea of a formal agreement between Dublin and London was formed. This plan was problematic. Unionists in Northern Ireland would

¹ 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement: An Interview with Sir David Goodall and Lord Armstrong of Ilminster,' in *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed., by Spencer, p. 49.

² Tom King, Baron King of Bridgewater, Conservative MP 1970-2001. Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1985-1989, Secretary of State for Defence 1989-1992.

³ Peter Prendergast, Irish civil servant. Irish Government Press Secretary 1982-1986.

inevitably reject Dublin having any formal role in ‘their’ province. Nationalists may not accept the re-clarification of Northern Ireland’s status as part of the UK. In January Robert Armstrong, head of Thatcher’s negotiating team, told FitzGerald, ‘the Prime Minister does not want to stand pat. She had told John Hume this and she had told President Reagan.’⁴

This chapter will focus on the months leading up to the AIA of November 1985. The chapter will examine the work of the Armstrong-Nally forum in particular.⁵ The importance of the Armstrong-Nally forums has been recognised before.⁶ Thatcher and FitzGerald only met a handful of times during 1985 at the EEC with the bulk of the negotiations carried out by their appointed teams. With access to the PREM and Taosieach files, we can understand how relations between these teams developed to the extent that they were on friendly terms by the time the AIA was signed. Understanding Thatcher’s leadership style, and her influence over Armstrong’s team, is also central to following the Dublin-London talks. Thatcher is often labelled as an autocratic leader with a ‘black and white’ cognitive style.⁷ Yet the AIA proves that she was comfortable, to a certain extent, to rely on her Ministers to form key policy.⁸ This is important because it proves that Thatcher began to disengage from Northern

⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, meeting with Armstrong, 22 Jan. 1985. Armstrong’s report of the meeting is in TNA UK, PREM 19/1548.

⁵ The Armstrong/Nally meetings occurred on the following dates, 21 Jan., 8 Feb., in London, 19 Feb., in Kildare, 22 Mar., in Dublin, 29-30 Apr., in Kent, 15 May, 14 June, 9 July in Dublin, 15-16 July, 21-22 July, 30-31 July in Kent, 3 Sept., 12-13 Sept., in London, 19 Sept., 24 Sept., in Dublin, 1 Oct., 8 Oct., 13-14 Oct., in London, 31 Oct., 13 Nov., in Dublin and 7 Dec., in Dublin.

⁶ See Paul Arthur, ‘Anglo-Irish Relations and the Northern Ireland Problem,’ *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1985), pp. 37-50, Fergal Cochrane, *Unionist Politics and the Politics of Unionism Since the Anglo-Irish Agreement* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), Harris, ‘Anglo-Irish Elite Cooperation,’ pp. 203-214, and Thomas Hennessey, *The Northern Ireland Peace Process: Ending The Troubles?* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2000) for more on the role British-Irish officials played in the negotiations. See also Geoffrey Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty* (London: Macmillan, 1994), Hurd, *Memoirs*, Brian Lenihan, *For the Record*, Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1991, Jim Prior, *A Balance of Power* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), and ‘The view from the castle,’ BBC, 1988, for personal reflections on meetings between officials.

⁷ Dyson, ‘Cognitive Style and Foreign Policy,’ pp. 33-48. MT’s leadership style has been discussed by her party colleagues in Aitken, *Margaret Thatcher*, Tony Benn, *The Benn Diaries* (London: Random House, 2017), John Biffen, *Semi-Detached* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013), Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past: The Memoirs of Lord Carrington* (London: Fontana, 1989), Alan Clark, *Diaries: Into Politics* (London: Orion, 2000) and *Diaries: In Power, 1983-1992* (London: Phoenix, 2003), Kenneth Clarke, *Kind of Blue: A Political Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 2016), Norman Fowler, *Ministers Decide: A Personal Memoir of the Thatcher Years* (London: Chapman’s Publishers, 1991), Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle*, Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, Hurd, *Memoirs*, Bernard Ingham, *Kill the Messenger* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), Norman Lamont, *In Office* (London: Little Brown, 1999), Nigel Lawson, *Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (London: Biteback, 2010), John Major, *The Autobiography* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), Cecil Parkinson, *Right at the Centre: An Autobiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1992), John Nott, *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: Memoirs of an Errant Politician* (London: Politico’s Publishing, 2002), Prior, *Balance of Power*, Francis Pym, *The Politics of Consent* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004), Nicholas Ridley, *My Style of Government: The Thatcher Years* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), Malcolm Rifkind, *Politics and Pragmatism: The Memoirs of Malcolm Rifkind* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016), Norman Tebbit, *Upwardly Mobile: An Autobiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988) and Whitelaw, *Memoirs*.

⁸ See Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 318 as well as Derek Birrell, *Direct Rule and the Governance of Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 36, Mulholland, ‘Just Another Country,’ p. 191. Emma Kilheaney also

Ireland policy after the out out out burst of 1984. After 1984 Thatcher's Northern Ireland policy entered stage two, disengagement. The Armstrong-Nally negotiations were not without their problems.

Both Dublin and London were wary as media leaks increased in the lead up to the agreement. Dublin accused one junior Minister of showing a draft agreement to the media, while King blamed Dublin of tactically leaking information to the press to quell unionist fears of the agreement.⁹ London was further antagonised by the 'Real Lives' affair.¹⁰ The BBC planned to air a programme featuring Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin MP for Londonderry, at home with his family and out in the community.¹¹ The programme was eventually edited at the government's request. Dublin and London also had to bear in mind American influence over the AIA. The State department supported the idea of an agreement and was considering contributing to a fund to support Northern Ireland. A misstep could spell disaster not only for Anglo-Irish relations, but for the people of Northern Ireland.

A Meeting of Minds? Anglo-Irish Forums, January-March 1985

The Armstrong-Nally talks were the backbone of the AIA.¹² Dialogue between ministers from Dublin and London had actually begun in the summer 1984, but ramped up following the Brighton Bomb.¹³ These meetings were carefully prepared for. Officials acted under the

reached this conclusion in her PhD thesis, 'Ministers Advise, Prime Minister's Decide? Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and Policy Making During the Thatcher Years,' PhD thesis, 2016, University of Manchester, Manchester.

⁹ Email correspondence with Lord King of Bridgewater, 9 Apr. 2017. NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/52, meeting between FitzGerald and MT on the morning of the signing, 15 Nov. 1985. According to this record, FitzGerald had told MT about the opening paragraph in Irish.

¹⁰ Greg McLaughlin and Stephen Baker, *The Propaganda of Peace: The Role of Media and Culture in the Northern Ireland Peace Process* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2010), pp. 90-91. See also Sarah Baxter, 'Thatcher and the Media,' *Woman: A Cultural Review*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1991), pp. 71-73, Jean Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors: The BBC and the Nation, 1974-1987* (London: Profile Books, 2015) for more on the 'Real Lives' controversy. Works on MT and her relationship with the media include, Jeremy Tunstall, 'The media: lapdogs for Thatcher?' *Contemporary Record*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1990), pp. 6-8, Jeremy Tunstall, 'The Media Portfolio: Revolution Under Thatcher,' *Contemporary Record*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1989), pp. 5-7, David Walker, 'The Media and the Fall of Thatcher,' *Contemporary Record*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1991), pp. 183-186 and Hugo Young, 'The Media Under Thatcher,' *Contemporary Record*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1990), pp. 6-8.

¹¹ Martin McGuinness, former PIRA leader. Chief negotiator for Sinn Féin, leader of Sinn Féin 2007-2017, deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland 2007-2017. McGuinness followed Sinn Féin's policy of abstention and, therefore, did not take his seat at Westminster.

¹² Arthur Aughey, 'Conservative Party Policy in Northern Ireland' in *The Northern Ireland Question*, ed., by Barton and Roche, p. 138.

¹³ See Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, pp. 303-315 for a comprehensive discussion of the 1984 Armstrong-Nally talks. Meetings in 1984 occurred on the following dates; 1 Mar., 10 May, 30 July, 3 Aug., 20 Sept., 17 Oct., 2-3 Nov., and 17 Dec. The files containing the records of these meetings are NAI, TAOIS 2014/105/825, TNA UK, PREM 19/1287, 19/1288 and 19/1289.

instructions of Thatcher and FitzGerald. The Taoiseach and Prime Minister would receive detailed reports on the discussion, and would then advise their delegation how to proceed. This ensured the talks remained confidential and avoided the media circus that surrounded meetings between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. The talks had both Thatcher and FitzGerald's full approval, but Thatcher did have to defend the initiative to party members, 'It is, of course, essential that we build a sound working relationship with the Irish Government. We now have a good base from which to start, but there will be difficult and sensitive issues.'¹⁴ The Armstrong-Nally Forums allowed Thatcher and FitzGerald to negotiate through an approved team in secret. The key figures from London were Armstrong, Hurd, until he was replaced as Secretary of State by King in September, Howe and David Goodall. Present on the Irish side were Nally, Barry, Spring, Michael Lillis and Seán Donlon.

Thatcher put Armstrong in charge of her team because he was Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service.¹⁵ She could, therefore, keep a close eye on the negotiations.¹⁶ Armstrong was sympathetic to nationalism and was 'always thinking about Ireland.'¹⁷ He had previously worked with Nally at the G7 summit and they personally got on well together.¹⁸ Goodall also had a particular interest in Ireland. His ancestor had been in the Irish Parliament, and he often made personal reflections on the Northern Ireland problem during the Armstrong-Nally forums. He told Noel Dorr that he believed Irish involvement in Northern Ireland would 'lead to a more equalised relationship between the two countries.' Dorr reflected that this was his "Irish side".¹⁹ Goodall got along well with the Dublin team and felt that both sides could talk with ease. He reflected that 'it could be compared only with the way in which the British can talk to some East Coast Americans.'²⁰ Howe and Hurd entered the negotiations officially in March. Howe had been ignorant on Irish matters, and confessed in his autobiography that initially '... there was no need for either Margaret or I to cast our eyes across the Irish sea.'²¹ Howe and Hurd had successfully persuaded Thatcher to

¹⁴ PRONI, CENT 3/39A, letter from MT to Biggs-Davison, 5 Feb. 1985 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, minute from Hurd to MT, 19 June 1985.

¹⁵ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 394 and Hurd, *Memoirs*, p. 335.

¹⁶ 'Anglo-Irish Agreement: 30 Years On,' *The Irish Times* supplement, 14 Nov. 2015.

¹⁷ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 302.

¹⁸ Lord Armstrong interview in *The Irish Times*, 14 Nov. 2015.

¹⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally discussions, Barretstown Castle Kildare, 19 Feb. 1985.

²⁰ *Ibid.*,

²¹ Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, p. 411.

allow them to join as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had an interest in maintaining good relations with Dublin.²² The Forum also gave them the opportunity to “‘re-trace the furrow’ at political level’ and to understand recent developments. They therefore had ‘a more direct feel for the pressures and constraints which operate on the Irish side ... and they in turn will be able to explain more directly to (the Irish) ministers the constraints and limitations on what the British side can do.’²³ King entered the negotiations following his appointment as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in September, and was shocked to discover that unionists had been excluded from the negotiations. King’s move to Northern Ireland was seen as a demotion from his previous post in Employment.²⁴ As Richard Needham wrote, ‘... those ministers that go to Ulster go for either of two reasons; as a step on the way up or as a step in the way out. In either case, they do not stay long.’²⁵ Norman Tebbit, then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, had advised Thatcher to drop King in the September Cabinet shuffle as he was ‘not using his opportunities at (the Department of Employment).’²⁶ Thatcher placed a tick beside this note, but underlined Tebbit’s further comment that she may wish to ‘hold that last option in reserve for next year.’²⁷ It appears Thatcher decided to send King to Northern Ireland ‘... to make room for the Prime Minister to appoint someone at the Department of Education more faithful to her dogma.’²⁸

At the head of the Dublin team was Nally. Nally was characterised by a London personality report as ‘an excellent civil servant, discreet, loyal and sensible. He is pleasant socially but is capable of taking a very robust line on instructions. He has a remarkable capacity for alcohol.’²⁹ Barry first became interested in Northern Ireland when he was elected to the Dáil in 1969. Barry’s nationalism had made him a pariah in Fine Gael, ‘... I was left paddling my own canoe in the middle of a raging storm.’³⁰ Spring was placed in the team as

²² TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, minute from Hurd to MT, 19 June 1985.

²³ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, letter from Dorr to Lillis, 12 Mar. 1985.

²⁴ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 330. Being moved to Northern Ireland was

²⁵ Richard Needham, *Battling for Peace* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1998), p. 122.

²⁶ Norman Tebbit, Baron Tebbit, Conservative MP 1970-1992. Tebbit was badly injured in the Brighton Bomb and his wife was paralysed.

²⁷ CAC, THCR 1/14/14, Tebbit letter to MT, 27 Aug. 1985.

²⁸ David Bloomfield and Maeve Lankford, ‘From Whitewash to Mayhem: The State of the Secretary in Northern Ireland,’ in *The Northern Ireland Question in British Politics*, p. 151.

²⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1809, personality report, undated. Also in TNA UK, FCO 87/2176.

³⁰ Interview with Peter Barry, *The Irish Times*, 14 Nov. 2015 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1809, personality report, undated. Also in FCO 87/2176.

he was Tánaiste. Spring felt that Northern Ireland was low on Thatcher's list of priorities. He suspected that '... she wasn't going to lose too much sleep over the catholics and protestants in Northern Ireland fighting with one another.'³¹ Lillis was described as someone who 'makes sure to get his point of view across; and on occasions, he can be sharply combative ... his colleagues consider him a "workaholic" and he can be found often at his desk at weekends.'³² Lillis was a nationalist but claimed to have an understanding of British attitudes through his English wife.³³ Donlon had been Irish Ambassador to the US. He had helped to establish the Friends of Ireland group. His relationship with the Americans was strong, so much so that when Haughey asked him to return to Ireland in 1980, two of the Four Horsemen intervened. Donlon stayed in the US until 1981. His rapport with the Americans gave him a unique insight into how the AIA would be received overseas, and the financial support Reagan would give.³⁴ By the end of the Armstrong-Nally talks, the two sides had grown so close that they had personalised ties designed which they wore to reunions.³⁵ According to Goodall, '... the detailed negotiations carried on within this very small group of officials, and we got to know one another very well.'³⁶

The first meeting of 1985 marked the beginning of serious negotiations between Dublin and London. The January meeting began with Armstrong handing over a paper on the AIIGC. London proposed a new body that would meet regularly to discuss North/South relations. The body would help to form policy and law, but would not represent a 'derogation of sovereignty on the part of either the United kingdom or the Republic.'³⁷ Nally removed from the meeting for 10 minutes to read the proposal in private. When he returned he delivered a personal assessment.³⁸ He felt that London was still focused on a 'shallower' set of proposals and was preoccupied with security.³⁹ According to Dublin's record of the

³¹ Dick Spring interviewed for 'Thatcher and the IRA, Dealing with Terror,' BBC, 2014.

³² TNA UK, CAB 164/1674, report on Michael Lillis, undated.

³³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1809, personality report, undated. Also in FCO 87/2176.

³⁴ Joseph E. Thompson, *American Policy and Northern Ireland: A Saga of Peacebuilding* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), p. 91.

³⁵ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 302.

³⁶ Goodall, 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement,' ed., by Spencer, p. 44.

³⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1548, AIIGC standing committee, 17 Jan. 1985. MT underlined this sentence to signify that she agreed with the point.

³⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985. London's record of the meeting is in TNA UK, PREM 19/1548.

³⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1548, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985 and NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985.

meeting, Armstrong argued that there was ‘no hard and clear line between “security” and “political” issues,’ but admitted the paper’s emphasis on security was ‘potentially problematic.’⁴⁰ Nally then asked how the minority would relate to the AIIGC. Armstrong replied that this was not the aim of the new body, a point Thatcher later underlined and ticked.⁴¹ The point of the AIIGC was to regulate contact between Dublin and London. Nally then outlined the difficulties surrounding power sharing and devolution.

Dublin and London agreed that no political party in Northern Ireland would be fully satisfied with their suggestions. At a meeting in January with Dublin, the OUP and DUP had said that they understood ‘Dublin’s right to be “interested” or to “show concern”’ in Northern Ireland.⁴² This contradicted their public position and some of the unionist delegates stressed that this was their personal view, but it was a promising step forward. Nally recalled how Irish and Northern Irish civil servants used to meet for an annual golf competition. Following the collapse of Sunningdale, the trip had been stopped by unionists. His point was that the two governments should aim to introduce a permanent settlement that could provide a long-term solution and improve relations on a personal level between Dublin and Belfast. Failure could further alienate Dublin from Belfast, as well as catholic from protestant, exaggerating the problem further. The conversation then moved on to Joint Courts.

After reading the proposal Nally asked London to reconsider the Courts issue. Dublin wanted terrorist cases to be heard by courts made up of judges from Northern Ireland and Ireland.⁴³ FitzGerald felt that the mixed system would work well, ‘the multiplicity of judges helping to avoid some of the danger that could arise if a single judge were to seek to carry out all the functions of a jury as well as his normal judicial duties.’⁴⁴ But the proposition raised difficulties, in particular the oath of allegiance that judges would take.⁴⁵ London promised to re-examine courts in more detail, but Nally was concerned by London’s initial

⁴⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985.

⁴¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1548, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985.

⁴² NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985.

⁴³ O’Kane, *Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland Since 1980*, p. 79.

⁴⁴ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 573.

⁴⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985.

laissez faire attitude towards the issue. London needed time to research the problem before presenting it to Dublin again. Next, Donlon asked about the unionist reaction to devolution.

An unnamed official from the NIO answered that question. In his opinion there had not been a large-scale ‘shift’ in unionist attitudes to Dublin. Lillis mentioned that a parliamentary tier could help garner unionist support for an agreement.⁴⁶ Overall, Dublin felt it was important to make a move as soon as possible and suggested ‘getting something in place before May.’ Although Nally was disappointed with the proposal, the meeting had gone well. Charles Powell noted that the meeting showed that Dublin had shown ‘signs of greater realism.’⁴⁷ The next meeting was set for February.

The 8 February meeting was used as an opportunity for Dublin to make a formal response to London’s proposal. Nally concluded that the proposal ‘would not be a sufficient basis on which to carry a constitutional referendum.’⁴⁸ Unless London would allow Dublin to put forward ideas and proposals on Northern Ireland in the AIIGC, they would not consider changing articles two and three of the Irish constitution, which laid claim to Northern Ireland as lost territory.⁴⁹ Nally’s team used articles two and three as their bargaining chip. Dorr said he had been told by an unnamed Conservative MP that London viewed the amendments as an integral part of the overall package.⁵⁰ But London wanted to proceed slowly. Powell told Thatcher that Armstrong did not want to ‘... rush back to the Irish in a matter of days with a reply.’ Thatcher wrote in response, ‘I am not able to give sufficient time to consider this until I return from the US. Delay any further meetings.’⁵¹

Although she had approved the January proposal, Thatcher had not looked at what had been done since. She was focused on the miner’s strike and was distracted by the Ponting

⁴⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985.

⁴⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1548, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Dublin, 21 Jan. 1985.

⁴⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1548, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Cabinet Office, London, 8 Feb. 1985. Dublin’s record of this meeting is in NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88.

⁴⁹ Article two referred to the whole Island of Ireland. Article three referred to Irish unification. These articles offended unionists in Northern Ireland.

⁵⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Cabinet Office, London, 8 Feb. 1985.

⁵¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1548, letter from Powell to MT, 13 Feb. 1985.

Affair.⁵² The later issue had revealed weakness within her government. Armstrong and Goodall felt that Thatcher's premiership was at a crossroads. They both expected 'that her power will go downhill from here on.'⁵³ Goodall added that London expected that any agreement would result in a 'great deal' of sacrifice 'in return for nothing.'⁵⁴ Nally surmised that London wanted to be "travelling hopefully" rather than 'arriving or having arrived' at any final decision.⁵⁵ At the second February meeting, Goodall suggested that London should draft another paper. This would turn Thatcher's attention back to Ireland as this paper would require her approval. The Armstrong-Nally forum was carefully building on ideas from the ground up, the foundations being the January 1985 proposal. Thatcher could not "bristle" and reject something new, as she had with the NIF report in 1984. Thatcher should not be rushed into anything. Her team needed 'to try to bring her along carefully.'⁵⁶

'The Americans made me do it': the USA and the AIA

American approval of the AIA was key to gaining monetary investment for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In February, Thatcher visited Washington to speak to the House of Congress. She had been advised that Northern Ireland would be a pivotal topic during her trip, so a powerful speech was prepared.⁵⁷ Thatcher reaffirmed British Sovereignty over Northern Ireland but went on to say,

If ever there were to be a majority in favour of change, then I believe that our Parliament would respond accordingly, for that is the principle of consent enshrined in your constitution and in an essential part of ours. There is no disagreement on this principle between the United Kingdom Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.⁵⁸

⁵² The Ponting Affair refers to leaked documents by Clive Ponting, then a senior Civil Servant, regarding the sinking of the *Belgrano*. Ponting sent two memos to a Labour MP claiming that the information was in the public interest. Ponting was charged with a criminal offence, but was later acquitted by a jury. He resigned from his post on 16 Feb. 1985.

⁵³ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Barretstown Castle Kildare, 19 Feb. 1985. There are documents pertaining to this meeting in TNA UK, PREM 19/1548.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, briefing for the Taoiseach, 20 Feb. 1985.

⁵⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Barretstown Castle Kildare, 19 Feb, 1985.

⁵⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1658, No. 10 briefing for MT, 3 Feb. 1985.

⁵⁸ MTF, MT speech to Joint Houses of Congress, 20 Feb. 1985.

Her speech was well received. The audience applauded her at regular intervals. At the March Anglo-Irish meeting, Armstrong reported to Dublin that she had found a ‘general benevolence in the White House.’⁵⁹

Following Thatcher’s visit to the USA, Nally asked Armstrong if Thatcher had any confirmation of US interest in the fund. London had not had formal confirmation at that stage but hoped Hurd would be able to discuss it with Reagan when he went to the US. Nally asked how the fund would be administered, which he hoped was ‘not a stupid question.’ Armstrong jovially replied, ‘the first thing would be an argument about additionality [*sic*] with the Treasury. We would need to think by whom, and how such a fund would be administered. Should it be a foundation outside the Government?’⁶⁰ London did ‘not want to look a gift horse in the mouth,’ but Howe urged that America should not be allowed to influence their talks. Howe later wrote,

The scale and nature of US involvement in all this needs to be seen in the right perspective. Only rarely were we under direct pressure from the other side of the Atlantic specifically to change our policies ... We did all this, as much as anything, in the overall British interest: to undermine American fund-raising for terrorism, to strengthen American willingness to extradite those wanted for trial.⁶¹

Dublin and London had struggled to minimise support for NORAID since the early 1970s. The PIRA fundraiser had captured the imagination of Irish-Americans who ‘... saw militant Irish republicanism as a more authentic expression of Irish culture.’⁶² From 1983 Irish-American attitudes had started to change as Dublin and London began to talk to each other,

... people of the US are taking a much more informed attitude to Northern Ireland affairs: they recognise the need to stop help going to terrorists and are sympathetic to

⁵⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting at Iveagh House, 22 Mar. 1985.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, There are documents pertaining to this meeting in TNA UK, PREM 19/1548 and a record of the meeting is also in TNA UK, PREM 19/1549.

⁶¹ Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, p. 422.

⁶² Brian Hanley, ‘The politics of NORAID,’ *Irish Political Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2004), pp. 1-17. See also Andrew J. Wilson, ‘The Conflict Between NORAID and the Friends of Irish Freedom,’ *The Irish Review*, vol. 15 (1994), pp. 40-50. For more on the role of American politicians and Ireland, see J. Cooper, ‘“A Log-Rolling, Irish-American Politician, out to Raise Votes in the United States”: Tip O’Neill and the Irish Dimension of Anglo-American Relations, 1977-1986,’ *Congress and the Presidency*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2015), pp. 1-27.

the talks we are having with the Irish Government. Only a conspicuous failure in these talks is likely to set back the progress which has been made.⁶³

Reagan had also made 'helpful St. Patrick's Day statements this year and last (1984 and 1985).' The Friends of Ireland group, founded by three of the so-called four horsemen, Tip O'Neill, Ted Kennedy and Daniel Moynihan, had also worked to inform Irish-Americans on Northern Ireland. The Friends of Ireland 'helped to ensure a generally responsible attitude from the Irish lobby in Congress ... the Americans now undoubtedly have a better understanding of the international threat posed by terrorism.'⁶⁴ To reap the benefits of this Goodall visited the US in June to meet with Admiral Poindexter.⁶⁵

The visit was risky. Information about the agreement could leak to the American press. Thatcher agreed that it was essential to get the Americans on side. She sanctioned the visit, but warned '... we can't bring the matter to a conclusion without speculation, we must require the strictest confidentiality.'⁶⁶ Goodall met with Poindexter and Martin Wenick, director of the Office of North European Affairs. Poindexter only spoke to say that he felt Reagan would be 'much reassured' by Goodall's account of Anglo-Irish relations, and while Wenick was 'equally supportive' he did question how unionists would react to it. Armstrong, rather ominously, told the Americans, 'unionist opposition to the proposed agreement was inevitable, but we hoped and believed that it would be containable.'⁶⁷ Poindexter then told Goodall that the State Department had considered giving between \$500 million and \$0.25 billion, 'of which the North would get the lion's share' to the fund after an agreement was signed. This was confirmation of Reagan's 'willingness to be generous to Northern Ireland after an agreement is signed.'⁶⁸ Dublin and London needed to continue to negotiate.

⁶³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, minute from Nicholas Scott to MT, 29 July 1985.

⁶⁴ *iBid.*

⁶⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, letter from G.E. Clark to Armstrong, Goodall and Brennan, 9 Aug. 1985.

⁶⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, letter from Appleyard to MT, 20 June 1985.

⁶⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, Anglo-Irish relations, briefing to the US administration, 2 July 1985.

⁶⁸ PRONI, CENT 3/65A, 'The American dimension of the Northern Ireland problem, 9 July 1985 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, letter from Appleyard to Powell, 2 July 1985. Underline in original document.

Armstrong-Nally Forums, March-June 1985

Before the March Armstrong-Nally meeting, Armstrong presented Thatcher with a new idea. Armstrong wanted to establish a sub-committee to inform Thatcher's Cabinet on Anglo-Irish dialogue. The sub-committee would then be able to pass policy to support any initiative. The sub-committee would include Thatcher, the Lord President of the Council, Whitelaw, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Howe, the Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Heseltine, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Tebbit, the Chief Secretary of the Treasury, Peter Rees, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Grey Gowrie, and the Attorney General, Michael Havers. Thatcher agreed to the new committee and suggested that the Lord Privy Seal, John Biffen, should be added to the list.⁶⁹ Included in the sub-committee were some of her friends, Gowrie, Tebbit and Whitelaw, and some of her old sparring partners, Heseltine and Howe. Behind the scenes, Armstrong steered Thatcher's attention back to Northern Ireland. Thatcher had become 'testy.' Howe and Hurd felt that going forward, she needed more encouragement.

Thatcher had started to ask 'what's really in it for us? and will it really work?'⁷⁰ At the March Armstrong-Nally meeting, Goodall told Lillis that FitzGerald 'had greater standing with Thatcher on (Northern Ireland) issues than even Howe and Hurd.' If FitzGerald could "'capture her imagination" ... without frightening her,' the process would be a lot smoother for everyone.⁷¹ Meetings with her own advisors were becoming difficult. Goodall reported that at the latest briefing, Thatcher had become 'very sharp and critical' and was 'going cold' on Ireland.⁷² The Armstrong-Nally forum had to coax Thatcher into making a move when in reality '... she did not pay continuous attention to the subject, at the opening of each meeting on Northern Ireland she tended to begin from square one and to repeat ancient themes which had been discussed and dealt with long before.'⁷³ Goodall aired his frustration with Thatcher's habit of separating security from politics. He had continually tried to tell Thatcher that the two problems were 'intrinsically linked,' 'He spoke with the rather

⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1548, letter from Armstrong to MT, 1 Mar. 1985.

⁷⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, summary of a meeting with Goodall, 12 Mar. 1985 and letter from Dorr to Lillis, 12 Mar. 1985.

⁷¹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Goodall on the Brussels Anglo-Irish meeting after Armstrong/Nally meeting, Iveagh House Dublin, 22 Mar. 1985.

⁷² NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, memo from Lillis to FitzGerald, 27 Mar. 1985.

⁷³ Hurd, *Memoirs*, p. 335, Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 341.

weary air of someone who had tried to do just that many times.⁷⁴ Security remained as a key issue.

Dorr raised the shoot-to-kill issue in March. He argued that there had been 35 incidents that were difficult to explain. He suggested that when accusations came to light, a procedure should be put in place whereby those responsible in the security forces would be transferred or suspended to reduce the risk of tit-for-tat attacks.⁷⁵ Dorrr also said that he understood that fatal force could be justified in some instances. There was a line to be drawn. The question was, where was it?⁷⁶ The issue was only touched on at this stage, it would become a greater problem later.⁷⁷ Armstrong told the Dublin team that London would need more time to deal with these issues. An official paper or agreement was still a long way off,

Armstrong: The Prime Minister's view is that the time to do something is when it is ready.

Donlon: It reminds me of what my mother used to say when we asked her as children when dinner would be ready. She would reply "when it's ready".

Armstrong: Clearly the pace will determine things. The Prime Minister will not want to commit herself to a date until she is sure ...⁷⁸

To try to get things moving, FitzGerald suggested that Dublin and London should try to agree on a set of guidelines for future joint press conferences,

This would not be easy to achieve but it was vital that it should be achieved. One of the problems could be differences in personality - it might be difficult for the Prime Minister and myself to sound the same note, but we had a very strong common interest in doing so. We could not forget the lessons of the experience of December 1980 and the damage done by the exaggerated presentation of what had happened after that meeting. While the present situation was very different and that particular

⁷⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, letter from Dorrr to Lillis, 12 Mar. 1985.

⁷⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, notes on discussion at lunch with Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and King, 22 Mar. 1985. A record of this meeting is also kept in NAI, DFA 2015/51/1560. There are documents pertaining to this meeting in TNA UK, PREM 19/1548 and a record of the meeting is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/1549.

⁷⁶ *iBbid.*,

⁷⁷ John Stalker's controversial dismissal from his role as investigator on the eve of his report's publication in 1986 caused a media sensation, attracting nationwide attention to shoot-to-kill (see chapter 6 for more on the Stalker inquiry).

⁷⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Armstrong/Nally meeting, Iveagh House Dublin, 22 Mar. 1985.

kind of danger did not exist, there still remained a real problem: to ensure that no wedge could be driven between us after an agreement had been announced.⁷⁹

An agreement on post-summit press conferences was especially important as the first Thatcher-FitzGerald meeting of the year was scheduled in just over a week's time. Ahead of this meeting, Goodall gave FitzGerald some advice on how to handle Thatcher.

Goodall advised FitzGerald to focus on the American fund. Thatcher favoured this idea as she believed that she had "thought of it". She would therefore feel confident talking about it.⁸⁰ At their meeting in March, it was evident that Thatcher was not as comfortable talking about Northern Ireland to FitzGerald as she used to be. 'Thatcher spoke from a brief, the Taoiseach from a page of notes.'⁸¹ FitzGerald used Goodall's advice. He told Thatcher that their teams had made considerable progress. 'He felt that this created an historic window of opportunity for Thatcher and himself to go forward on the basis of the Chequer's *communiqué*.'⁸² FitzGerald then turned to Thatcher's overarching concern; security.

FitzGerald asked for help with a case involving the PIRA laundering money to a bank account in Switzerland. According to Goodall, 'the Taoiseach's mind was more than usually difficult to fathom' but Thatcher promised to help investigate the matter further.⁸³ FitzGerald also talked about the post office in Creggan, a large housing estate in Londonderry, which had closed because the RUC could no longer protect it. Pensioners had to travel by bus to lift their pensions in another town. Some travelled by a taxi paid for by the PIRA. FitzGerald asked if an unarmed, community police could be created and deployed to such areas to support the RUC. Thatcher did not comprehend the suggestion. She asked if FitzGerald meant something like the 'B' specials.⁸⁴ FitzGerald tartly responded, 'No; that would be

⁷⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, discussion at lunch during Armstrong/Nally meeting, Iveagh House Dublin, 22 Mar. 1985. FitzGerald is identified as the speaker in London's record of the lunch time discussion in TNA UK, PREM 19/1549.

⁸⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Goodall on the Brussels Anglo-Irish meeting 27 Mar. 1985 and memo from Lillis to FitzGerald, 27 Mar. 1985.

⁸¹ NAI, DFA 2015/51/1560, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, EEC Brussels, 30 Mar. 1985. Records of this meeting are also held in NAI, DFA 2015/51/1560, NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/86 and TAOIS 2015/89/88. London's record of the meeting is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/1549.

⁸² NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, Goodall on the Brussels Anglo-Irish meeting 27 Mar. 1985, MT/FitzGerald meeting, EEC Brussels, 30 Mar. 1985.

⁸³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, letter from Armstrong to Goodall, 1 Apr. 1985.

⁸⁴ The Ulster Special Constabulary or 'B' Specials were a reserve force installed in Northern Ireland following partition. The force was armed but had no clear disciplinary code, and was almost entirely protestant. It was accused of carrying out

entirely the wrong name to call this unarmed force.’ He mentioned a similar police service that had been set up during the Irish civil war of 1922-23. Although they had initially faced difficulties they eventually succeeded. Thatcher was not receptive to this idea. She asked if FitzGerald wanted a group of ‘vigilantes’ to be installed in problem areas. In the end, Armstrong intervened to say that he understood what FitzGerald meant.⁸⁵ It seems Thatcher was deliberately obtuse due to her misgivings over the Anglo-Irish talks. Even so, the idea was further researched with the help of the Chief Constable of the RUC.⁸⁶ FitzGerald had made a study of the 1969 Scarman Report prior to the June EEC meeting, and attempted to explain to Thatcher why the police needed to be restructured,

Taoiseach: We have looked recently at the Scarman Report. An incident there involved a machinegun attack on Divis Flats in which a child was killed. There was a second incident in which whole streets of Catholics were burnt out and a third of a similar nature in all of which a particular police officer was involved. These incidents are mentioned in the Scarman Report. The officer is not named but he had recently been promoted to one of the highest offices in the Northern Ireland Police. What kind of sensitivity is that? Do you think that a minority community can support a police force where that sort of thing happens?

Prime Minister (visibly moved): I am sure that Douglas Hurd would never ...

Taoiseach: That is the very point. Someone is not telling him ...

Prime Minister: Are there any similar incidents of which you can tell me ...

Taoiseach: I am using this instance as an illustration. I do not want to get into details. We are not engaging in a witch hunt.⁸⁷

FitzGerald was concerned that, despite the new RUC code of conduct, London would not change the RUC’s oath of allegiance. The oath, as it stood, put members of the nationalist community off joining the RUC as they had to swear to protect the Queen. Dublin thought it would be better to swear an oath to the two communities in Northern Ireland instead.⁸⁸ FitzGerald understood the reasons for the British decision; a change to the oath would dent

reprisal attacks on the nationalist community, leading to further suspicion and estrangement between the minority and the police.

⁸⁵ NAI, DFA 2015/51/1560, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, EEC Brussels, 30 Mar. 1985.

⁸⁶ In June it was concluded that deploying unarmed police in Northern Ireland was too risky as ‘the dangers of terrorist infiltration and manipulation are too great in present circumstances.’ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, memo from Powell to MT, June 1985.

⁸⁷ NAI, DFA 2015/51/1560, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, 29 June 1985.

⁸⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, Dublin 401 to FCO, 24 June 1985.

the confidence of the unionists, ‘but it was difficult to see how it could be presented as anything other than a slap in the face. He did not see how he could explain it.’⁸⁹ The gap had to be bridged. The nationalist community needed to see evidence of change in regards security, certainly ‘more than cosmetic and gradualist changes.’⁹⁰ The RUC and Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) were viewed as emblems of brutality and discrimination by the minority community. RUC Officers were mainly protestant and since the start of The Troubles, relations between the minority community and the police was increasingly problematic.⁹¹ Changing the oath could increase the number of catholic recruits and, therefore, strengthen relations between the RUC and the minority. But ‘Thatcher and her advisors were always conscious of the reaction such changes could provoke. They took account ‘not just of Unionist reaction (in parliament or on the hillsides) but also of the opinions of cabinet ministers and the mass of Conservative back benchers in the Commons.’⁹²

FitzGerald told Thatcher that although the paper was ‘more or less alright,’ there were still some outstanding issues. Thatcher was still wary of making a formal agreement with Dublin. She had told members of her Cabinet that she wanted to do something about Ireland, but she did not know what that something was.⁹³ ‘... she did not have enough knowledge and backing to frame an alternative. She felt she had to do *something* and she allowed herself to be persuaded of the likely benefits of most of it.’⁹⁴ Thatcher relied on Enoch Powell’s opinion. Whitelaw commented that Powell had ‘a strange (influence) on Thatcher from across the aisle of the House of Commons.’ Whitelaw also repeated Thatcher’s desire to do something about Ireland, but in a tone that ‘conveyed a worried hope-rather than a certainty-that her good intentions would ultimately prevail over her doubts.’⁹⁵ Privately, Thatcher felt that ‘it would not be tolerable to be locked into an agreement which was functioning badly,

⁸⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, Goodison 400 to FCO, 24 June 1985.

⁹⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, minute from Hurd to MT, 25 June 1985.

⁹¹ Aogán Mulcahy, *Policing Northern Ireland* (New York: Willan Publishing, 2006), p. 8. See ‘Introduction’ in this thesis for more on relations between the RUC and the nationalist community.

⁹² *Fortnight*, no. 221, 1985.

⁹³ Goodall, ‘The Anglo-Irish Agreement,’ ed., by Spencer, p. 40.

⁹⁴ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 342.

⁹⁵ NAI, DFA 2015/51/1560, lunch with Lord Whitelaw, 9 June 1985. A record of this meeting is also kept in TAOIS 2015/89/91.

but would be difficult to denounce. We must leave ourselves a retreat.’⁹⁶ Thatcher surmised that Dublin and London,

... both had the same problem in mirror image. He was worried that he had gone too far in the negotiations and would lose support. She was fearful of the reactions of the Unionists to the proposed agreement. They would say that the Government had conceded a permanent foot in the door to the Irish Government in Northern Ireland without receiving anything worthwhile in return. Equally it would be very damaging now not to go ahead with the proposed agreement.⁹⁷

FitzGerald suggested that the Commissioner of the Garda, Lawrence Wren, and Chief Constable of the RUC, John Hermon, should be included in the new Intergovernmental Committee. This was a surprising idea, given the ‘well-known antipathy’ between the two heads of police.⁹⁸ Earlier in June, Alan Goodison reported that FitzGerald was ‘disturbed’ and ‘very upset’ by rumours that London was going to appoint a new police authority for Northern Ireland. Goodison told Nally that London could not ‘be expected to act as if an agreement were already in place.’ London still had ultimate authority over Northern Ireland and could do what it thought best without consulting Dublin. Armstrong noted on the memo that he had warned Dublin of this, ‘Will they ever learn?’⁹⁹ The day after this blip, Hurd met with FitzGerald and Barry to discuss their concerns.

FitzGerald had been told that Hurd was going to brief the unionist parties on the content of the Armstrong-Nally talks. FitzGerald had agreed to postpone any agreement until after the July fortnight ‘to avoid the kind of explosion which talking to (unionists) must cause.’ FitzGerald told Hurd that he had kept Hume and Mallon informed because Dublin needed ‘to know that what they did would have the support of the SDLP.’ This excuse did not convince Hurd. He replied that ‘if the Irish Government needed the support of the SDLP we both needed the acquiescence of the unionists.’¹⁰⁰ That same day, *The Irish Times* had

⁹⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, note for the record by Powell, 6 June 1985.

⁹⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, MT meeting with FitzGerald, 29 June 1985. Dublin’s record of the meeting is kept in NAI, DFA 2015/51/1340, DFA 2015/51/1560 and NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/86.

⁹⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, minute from Armstrong to MT, 18 June 1985.

⁹⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, Dublin 378 to FCO, 18 June 1985.

¹⁰⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, minute from Hurd to MT, 18 June 1985.

published an *exposé* on the Anglo-Irish talks. The article was accurate and covered each of the main topics from the parliamentary tier to devolution.¹⁰¹ How had this leak occurred?

Dublin and London had previously relied on ‘megaphone diplomacy’ to talk to each other.¹⁰² But since 1980, efforts had been made by both sides to talk directly and secretly to each other. James Sharkey, a Counsellor in Dublin’s DFA, pleaded with the British Embassy in Dublin to be wary of leaks. He stressed that ‘the undesirability of partial presentations or speculations about the content of the talkds [*sic*] at the present stage of negotiation.’¹⁰³ However King suspected that Dublin was tactically leaking details of the talks to allay unionist fears. He surmised that he was ‘not surprised that it backfired!’¹⁰⁴ The articles only fanned the flames of unionist discontent. The Armstrong-Nally forum, as well as talks between Thatcher and FitzGerald, were conducted in secret. Information was getting to the newspapers. *The Irish Times* was ‘uncomfortably close to the truth’ on the content of the Anglo-Irish meetings, with articles detailing the argument for mixed courts.¹⁰⁵ Both articles were written by a London based editor, leading Dublin to point the finger firmly at London and the NIO. It was suggested that Thatcher should step in by asking the Northern Ireland sub-committee (OD(I)) if confidentiality measures were being adhered to.¹⁰⁶ The AIA sought to strengthen the professional ties between Dublin and London to create ‘clearer and greater trust between the two governments. If difficulties arose the first response was not to turn to the media but to talk, and on the whole I think we succeeded in doing that.’¹⁰⁷ FitzGerald closed the meeting with a heartfelt plea to Thatcher and her team,

Speaking with considerable emotion the Taoiseach said that he wanted the Prime Minister to understand that the Irish Government and people did not want a role in Northern Ireland. He was regarded as eccentric because of the time and effort which he was devoting to reach an agreement. He was the only person willing to take risks and force the Irish people to face up to the need for an agreement ... For 800 years Britain had occupied Ireland to protect its flank. There was now a serious risk of

¹⁰¹ *The Irish Times*, 18 June 1985.

¹⁰² Robert Armstrong, ‘The Anglo-Irish Agreement,’ ed., by Spencer, p. 43.

¹⁰³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, telegram from Dublin 573, 28 Aug. 1985.

¹⁰⁴ Email correspondence with Lord King of Bridgewater, 9 Apr. 2017.

¹⁰⁵ *The Irish Times*, 15 and 16 May, 1985.

¹⁰⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, letter from Armstrong to Powell, 22 May 1985.

¹⁰⁷ Armstrong, ‘The Anglo-Irish Agreement,’ ed., by Spencer, p. 43.

ending up with what we had always tried to avoid, an Ireland under hostile and sinister influence.¹⁰⁸

July began with a brief discussion on joint courts. Again, Nally said that Dublin could not sign an agreement without a formal commitment from London on a new judicial system in Northern Ireland. Nally also offered to send the Irish Attorney General, John Rogers, to Thatcher to discuss the subject.¹⁰⁹ Armstrong stuck to policy. He told Nally that there could be no commitment as joint courts would cause a plethora of issues, political and legal. Thatcher wrote on the memo ‘we cannot agree to this.’¹¹⁰ Nally again tried to get a formal commitment from London on 15 July, and once again failed. At the next Armstrong-Nally summit on 21 and 22 July, London offered to increase contacts between the British and Irish Attorney Generals. Havers, was “jacked up” and had expected contact from Rogers. This was the furthest London could go, but the offer was ‘insufficient’ for Dublin.¹¹¹

Leaks to the press continued over the summer. On 30 July, Conor Cruise O’Brien wrote that there was a final offer on the table. O’Brien did not know the details of the deal, but he did know that it involved executive control over Northern Ireland staying in London. O’Brien wrote that FitzGerald should not accept any deal from London. The article was deemed important enough for Thatcher’s attention.¹¹² There were calls for FitzGerald to focus on what he wanted to gain from the AIA, rather than what John Hume and Thatcher wanted. ‘There are times when Garret FitzGerald gives the impression of operating on all their behalfs [*sic*] ... at the expense of his own. He should be more selfish politically, more-shrewd, and more relaxed. The crick in his neck from looking over his shoulder will then disappear.’¹¹³ If Dublin was leaking details of the talks to the press to keep unionists on side, it was not working. Over the summer marching season, unionists took to the streets to vent their anger,

¹⁰⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, MT meeting with FitzGerald, 29 June 1985.

¹⁰⁹ John Rogers, Irish Attorney general 1984-1987.

¹¹⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, Armstrong/Nally meeting, 9 July 1985.

¹¹¹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/86, Armstrong/Nally meeting, 21-22 July 1985.

¹¹² *The Irish Times*, 30 July 1985. Goodison sent a full transcript of the article. It is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/1550.

¹¹³ *The Evening Herald*, 31 Aug. 1985.

The Northern Ireland Secretary reported that the situation in Northern Ireland had taken a turn for the worse since their last meeting. The Official Unionists had chosen to devote their Opposition day to a debate on the negotiations with the Republic. Dr. Paisley was stoking discontent. For the first time mention was being made of strike action. ... Minor disturbances were becoming a regular feature in the Shankill Road.¹¹⁴

The 'Real Lives' Affair

While Dublin and London continued to negotiate, the BBC filmed a documentary for the 'Real Lives' series called 'At the edge of the union.' The programme depicted Martin McGuinness, a self-confessed member of the PIRA, as a dedicated family man. This gave him a 'human face' and softened his reputation. 'Here was a man regarded as an IRA commander shown at home with his wife and family, carrying out his role as a councillor and going to church. It sat very uneasily with the anti-terrorist propaganda of the armalite-toting, masked IRA man.'¹¹⁵ Only a month previously, Thatcher had given an emphatic speech at the American Bar Association in which she said that 'terrorists' should be starved 'of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend.' Thatcher said she did not mean outright censorship but had called on the media to adopt a code of conduct '... under which they would not say or show anything which could assist the terrorists' morale or their cause ...'¹¹⁶

Leon Brittan, Thatcher's Home Secretary, wrote to Stuart Young, Chairman of the BBC, to ask him to reconsider broadcasting the documentary.¹¹⁷ Brittan wrote that the programme 'would be giving an immensely valuable platform to those who have evinced an ability, readiness and intention to murder indiscriminately its own viewers.' It would also cause distress to the family members of PIRA victims. He quoted Thatcher's US Bar Association speech and referred to the Trans World Airlines hijack in June.¹¹⁸ Brittan argued that 'Even if the programme and any surrounding material were, as a whole, to present

¹¹⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, letter from Powell to Daniell, 3 July 1985.

¹¹⁵ McLaughlin and Baker, *The Propaganda of Peace*, pp. 90-91. See also Baxter, 'Thatcher and the Media,' pp. 71-73, Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors* for more on the 'Real Lives' controversy. Works on MT and her relationship with the media include Jeremy Tunstall, 'The Media: Lapdogs for Thatcher?' *Contemporary Record*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1990), pp. 6-8, Tunstall, 'The Media Portfolio: Revolution Under Thatcher,' pp. 5-7 and Walker, 'The Media and the Fall of Thatcher,' pp. 183-186 and Young, 'The Media under Thatcher,' pp. 6-8.

¹¹⁶ MTF, speech to American Bar Association, 15 July 1985.

¹¹⁷ Leon Brittan, Baron Brittan of Spennithorne, Conservative MP 1974-1988. Home Secretary 1983-1985.

¹¹⁸ A TWA aircraft was hijacked by terrorists a few weeks before MT's speech in July. The passengers were held hostage for 17 days and one American citizen, who was in the US Navy, was killed.

terrorist organisations in a wholly unfavourable light, I would still ask you not to permit it to be broadcast.’¹¹⁹ The BBC Board of Governors suspected that the programme panicked the Thatcher Government mainly because it clashed with Thatcher’s ‘oxygen of publicity’ speech. Brittan’s letter was an attempt to save the Prime Minister’s face. The Board of Governors wrestled between the importance of broadcasting a programme that had already been advertised, and going against the wishes of Downing Street.¹²⁰

Alan Protheroe, the Assistant Director General, argued that the programme was a political documentary. ‘... it underlined the irreconcilability of these two positions (unionism and republicanism); he did not believe it could be seen as an incitement to terrorism or as a justification of the use of violence.’ But other programmes that mirrored tense political situations had postponed to a later date. For example, ‘Ms. Rhymney Valley,’ about a mining community in South Wales at the time of the miners’ strike while the strike was on.’ The play was screened later, perhaps the same could be done with ‘Real Lives’?¹²¹ No. Alasdair Milne, the Director General, felt that a fair compromise was to screen an edited documentary. ‘Real Lives’ had to “hit the air if this place is to run properly” and the BBC were to maintain its credibility.’¹²² In fact, the ‘Real Lives’ episode ‘... dented the reputation’ of the BBC, and the Thatcher Government was accused of censorship.¹²³ In July Gerald Kauffman, Labour MP, delivered a damning summation of the incident. ‘Thatcher gives a lot of impressions. One of the impressions that she gives is that since she doesn’t even allow free speech in her own cabinet, she doesn’t want anyone else to exercise it.’¹²⁴

The Last Push: Anglo-Irish Negotiations, July-November 1985

London still did not know how an Anglo-Irish agreement would impact Northern Ireland. Cabinet had concluded that although the Agreement could ‘be of substantial benefit ... it was not a solution to the problem of Northern Ireland: it would be only a step forward.’¹²⁵ The

¹¹⁹ MTF, Brittan letter to Stuart Young (BBC Chairman), 29 July 1985.

¹²⁰ The documentary had received extensive advertisement within *The Radio Times*.

¹²¹ MTF, BBC Board of Management minutes, 29 July 1985.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 5 Aug. 1985.

¹²³ *The Sunday Times*, 4 Aug. 1985, *The Irish Times*, 7 Aug. 1985, *The Irish Examiner* and *The Times*, 8 Aug. 1985, *The Guardian*, 30 Aug. 1985.

¹²⁴ BUFVCD, ‘Northern Ireland documentary row,’ July 1985.

¹²⁵ TNA UK, CAB 128/81/26, conclusions, 25 July 1985.

Armstrong-Nally talks had continued behind the scenes, but now Thatcher needed to make a commitment to the process. Armstrong told her ‘our preferred timetable seems likely to be an Anglo-Irish Summit in late October followed quickly by debates in the House of Commons and the Dáil and then by the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission.’ But Thatcher wanted to stick to protocol. She noted, ‘We have to debate these here before they are communicated.’ Thatcher was also unimpressed with the current draft agreement and put her squiggles underneath Armstrong’s assertion that the draft had been ‘agreed with the FCO and the NIO. We believe that it fairly reflects British interests.’ The Irish side wanted to reach agreement on the status of prisoners and asked Armstrong if Thatcher would agree to announce that terrorist prisoners in Northern Ireland ‘who have been convicted of terrorist crimes.’ This was too much for Thatcher. She scribbled that this point may have been approved by the NIO, but ‘Not with (her).’ Thatcher wrote at the bottom of the page, ‘I am utterly astounded by this minute. I am not prepared to go ahead with either of these things. NO. MT.’¹²⁶ Thatcher may not have been directly involved in the negotiations, but on certain points her directions were clear.

Armstrong presented Thatcher with the option of restricting Army activity. In effect, the Army could only be active in the presence of the RUC. However, the presented paragraph was rejected not only for its content, but its presentation. Thatcher scribbled beside it, ‘Shouldn’t dream of putting my name to such terrible English.’¹²⁷ An advisor asked if her comment extended ‘to disliking the principles?’ Thatcher replied, ‘What is the paragraph trying to say? That we shall discuss how to return to a situation of normal policing? Or that the Army acts now rather than in support of the civil power? If we work out the meaning we can find the words.’¹²⁸ The Armstrong-Nally forum then finished until September for summer recess. When it returned, there were major changes to the London team.

Thatcher had made light-hearted threats to shuffle key British diplomats. Goodall reported to Dorr that Thatcher had joked, “‘It is time we found you a good Embassy, Mr.

¹²⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, minute from Armstrong to MT, 26 July 1985. Underlines are present on original document. A wiggly line meant that MT thought the text was ‘absolute nonsense.’

¹²⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, minute from Armstrong to MT, 8 Aug. 1985.

¹²⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, minute from Flesher to MT, 9 Aug. 1985.

Goodall”. He had asked where and she had replied “Indonesia”!’ Although Dorr resigned this as ‘Thatcher’s rather heavy effort at banter,’ the remarks were unsettling and ‘cruel.’¹²⁹ In September, there was a Cabinet reshuffle. Goodall stayed in the Foreign Office, but Thatcher moved Hurd to the Home Secretary’s Office. His replacement as Secretary of State was Tom King. Disbelief resounded in Dublin. The Armstrong-Nally negotiations were in the final stages, ‘changing the relevant minister implied that Thatcher did not really give much thought to Ireland.’¹³⁰ Thatcher had given ‘the Irish Government and the Irish people, north and south, a good resounding slap in the teeth.’¹³¹ In his autobiography, Hurd wrote that the job was ‘a marked promotion’ that he could not reject.¹³² King was a virtual unknown. He had held various, short-lived cabinet posts under Thatcher since 1976. His move from Employment to Northern Ireland was considered a demotion, and King admitted he ‘was in no sense an expert on Ulster matters.’¹³³ But Thatcher felt he was the right man for the job. ‘... Tom went with good grace and to good effect.’¹³⁴

King met with FitzGerald and Barry soon after his appointment as Secretary of State. FitzGerald recalled that King wanted a new Anglo-Irish process to have a ‘soft launch.’¹³⁵ London had promised that joint courts would be examined but King warned FitzGerald that it would be done with little ‘enthusiasm.’ ‘(King) was very dubious about the whole concept and if any agreement was to be entered into in good faith, the Irish side should understand that from the outset.’ Joint courts could be the ‘straw to break the camel’s back so far as the unionists were concerned.’¹³⁶ King wanted to remove the article on joint courts as he felt it tipped the balance in Dublin’s favour. He was particularly concerned with the unionist reaction to the agreement.¹³⁷ Thatcher agreed with King. She felt the agreement was in Dublin’s favour but did not know what to do about it. King was effectively powerless to change the terms of the agreement, having been appointed only two months before it was due

¹²⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/88, letter from Dorr to Lillis, 12 Mar. 1985.

¹³⁰ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 308.

¹³¹ *The Leinster Express*, 4 Sept. 1985.

¹³² Hurd, *Memoirs*, p. 346.

¹³³ Email correspondence with Lord King of Bridgewater, 9 Apr. 2017.

¹³⁴ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 421.

¹³⁵ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 557.

¹³⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, King meeting with FitzGerald, 17 Sept. 1985.

¹³⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, letter from King to MT, 25 Sept. 1985.

to be signed. Thatcher instead looked at his objections as an opportunity to ‘look at the text afresh.’¹³⁸ She requested to meet with King, Armstrong and Howe.¹³⁹

At that meeting on 2 October, King’s objections were over ruled. Thatcher was “too far down the road” to go back on the Armstrong-Nally negotiations.¹⁴⁰ The risks of signing an agreement and having Dublin involved in Northern Ireland outweighed the risk of abandoning an agreement, especially given the rise in support for Sinn Féin. It was decided to press on with negotiations. Thatcher advised Armstrong to ‘make crystal clear that the Irish Government would have no executive role in the North ... Decisions in Northern Ireland would remain for us.’¹⁴¹ Thatcher pooh-poohed King’s concerns and sided with Armstrong and Howe, who were more experienced.¹⁴² All this contradicts the popular image of Thatcher as an autocratic leader. In this instance,

... her heart was ... compelled to yield, albeit grudgingly, to her highly intelligent head; and this not under pressure from others because she, a woman of integrity, could weigh evidence, perceive what course would turn out best and, against natural impulse, decide to follow it.¹⁴³

At the end of September, the Armstrong-Nally forum focused on security.

Armstrong quizzed Nally on Dublin’s promise to sign the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (ECST). Accession to the ECST would show a formal commitment by Dublin to defeating the PIRA and working alongside London.¹⁴⁴ The ECST would also close a loophole on extradition whereby people who committed politically motivated crimes could not be extradited.¹⁴⁵ The ECST was introduced in Autumn because Dublin had ruled out amending articles two and three of the constitution. London ‘... had created a disturbingly unilateral bargaining situation, one in which they were in a position to

¹³⁸ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 331 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, minute from Powell to Daniel, 2 Oct. 1985.

¹³⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, minute from Powell to MT, 27 Sept. 1985.

¹⁴⁰ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 331.

¹⁴¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, MT meeting with Armstrong, Howe and King, 2 Oct. 1985.

¹⁴² Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 331.

¹⁴³ Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past*, pp. 275-276.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Cunningham, *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland, 1969-2000* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 62.

¹⁴⁵ O’Kane, *Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland Since 1980*, p. 54.

make and withhold concessions at will because we had virtually nothing on the table to offer in turn.’¹⁴⁶ Nally argued that Dublin wanted to accede to the ECST, but that it would be difficult unless London made a concession for them on three judge courts. Nally felt if FitzGerald signed the agreement as it stood, it would be illogical. ‘... we were arguing that the Northern court system was flawed ...’ yet London wanted Dublin to ‘... facilitate extradition to those same courts.’ Armstrong wondered if recruiting catholic judges to the Northern Ireland judicial system would be enough to increase nationalist confidence, but Nally said that that ‘... would not be sufficient.’¹⁴⁷ The discussion then moved on to the UDR.

The UDR was a regiment of the British Army, deployed exclusively in Northern Ireland from 1970 to defend the province from paramilitary attack. The UDR recruited from the population in Northern Ireland and had a high number of former ‘B’ specials in their battalion. There were also rumours that loyalist paramilitaries had infiltrated the regiment to steal weapons and gain experience.¹⁴⁸ FitzGerald felt that the existence of the UDR was detrimental to nationalists and wanted to disband it completely.¹⁴⁹ Armstrong had told Nally at an earlier September meeting that the UDR would be ‘kept under review.’ Dublin wondered ‘... whether they could go ahead with an Anglo-Irish agreement at all.’ London was holding its cards close to its chest. Dublin needed to know what they were really thinking and asked them to produce a brief that they could take back to FitzGerald.¹⁵⁰ By the end of September, London agreed to have the RUC accompany all UDR patrols.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, it looked as though Thatcher was in trouble.

The Cabinet shuffle in September had caused ‘genuine and widespread worry’ in Thatcher as leader. Some Conservatives had started a search for ‘realistic possibilities for the next leadership.’ Peter Bruinvels, Conservative MP for Leicester East, reported that ‘...

¹⁴⁶ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 534.

¹⁴⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/52, Armstrong/Nally meeting, 29-30 Sept. 1985. Dublin’s record of this meeting is in NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/52.

¹⁴⁸ John Furniss Potter, *A Testimony to Courage - The Regimental History of the Ulster Defence Regiment 1969-1992* (Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2001), chpt. 15. See also Martin Dillon, *The Dirty War: Covert Strategies and Tactics Used in Political Conflicts* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 192-193.

¹⁴⁹ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 514.

¹⁵⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, minute from Armstrong to MT, 11 Sept. 1985.

¹⁵¹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/52, Armstrong/Nally meeting, 29-30 Sept. 1985.

Thatcher would have to go (and Bruinvels says this as someone who has given her vociferous support in the past); the right (including himself) will propose Norman Tebbit; the left will propose Peter Walker; they will then jointly agree on the compromise candidate: Douglas Hurd.¹⁵² Thatcher needed a definitive move on Northern Ireland. There would be no Falklands factor to save her this time. This is partly why we see Thatcher become acutely involved in the negotiations from October onwards. Armstrong had told her that ‘the Irish Government are trembling on the brink of an agreement but need a concession on either joint courts or the role and development of the UDR to tip them over the edge.’¹⁵³

Thatcher carefully checked over the draft agreements. When the word ‘committee’ was used, she noted,

Having read the agreement again I fear it does not accurately convey our meaning. The fact is that this committee is no more than consultative. We have made it sound as if we have given the Republic more authority in our affairs. We haven’t and don’t intend to.¹⁵⁴

Thatcher also rejected the term ‘conference.’ She wrote on a memo ‘It isn’t a conference. It is a committee.’¹⁵⁵ Thatcher felt that the draft agreement was still in Dublin’s favour. She worried that ‘... those who argued that the Agreement held out the prospect of closer co-operation against terrorism, the riposte would be that it should not be necessary for the UK to pay a price for Irish co-operation in this field.’¹⁵⁶ With an agreement imminent, Thatcher wrote to FitzGerald to clarify a few outstanding points.

Thatcher told FitzGerald that she would be unable to sign an agreement in October as she was travelling to the US to meet with Reagan. She suggested a date in mid-November so that the agreement could be debated by the Commons in good time.¹⁵⁷ In reply, Nally proposed signing the agreement in New York as FitzGerald would be there the same week

¹⁵² NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/92, letter from Ryan to Lillis, 7 Oct. 1985.

¹⁵³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, memo from Powell to MT, 11 Sept. 1985.

¹⁵⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1550, minute from Powell to MT, 26 Sept. 1985.

¹⁵⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, minute from Powell to MT, 10 Oct. 1985.

¹⁵⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, letter from Powell to Daniell, 2 Oct. 1985.

¹⁵⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, letter from MT to FitzGerald, 4 Oct. 1985 and NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/92.

as Thatcher. Powell wrote on the letter, ‘This won’t do at all. It would put us under time-pressure before the substance is finalized; we leave no time for Cabinet consideration.’ Thatcher agreed and rejected the suggestion.¹⁵⁸ Thatcher also asked FitzGerald to reconsider the location of the Anglo-Irish Secretariat. The Secretariat was to be based at Maryfield in Belfast, but London was concerned that having a permanent base would make personnel sitting ducks for paramilitaries. The Maryfield team would have important work to do in helping the agreement.¹⁵⁹ Thatcher asked FitzGerald to keep his appointments to the body ‘small’ so that the team could be moved around different sites until ‘the new arrangements have settled down.’¹⁶⁰ October saw the draft of the AIA passed back and forth between Dublin and London.

On 9 October, it was agreed that the AIA would be signed on 15 November. London wanted to ensure the agreement conveyed the correct meaning and would not inflame the unionists. At this time, King asked Thatcher for permission to bring his Parliamentary Private Secretary, Brian Mawhinney, with him to the rest of the meetings with Dublin.¹⁶¹ Mawhinney could then field questions from Conservative backbenchers on the agreement following its signature.¹⁶² This was a risky strategy. The agreement was a month away and extending the inner circle would increase the risk of leaks to the media. Indeed, there were already accusations from Dublin that a junior Minister had shown a draft copy of the AIA to the press in Blackpool. Powell mentioned that Mawhinney had close contacts with some ‘fairly extreme’ unionists. He had recently met with Paisley and was suspected of being the Minister with the draft.¹⁶³ Powell wrote on a memo to Thatcher, ‘I don’t like the way these allegations are flying about,’ and Thatcher replied, ‘Nor do I.’¹⁶⁴ Thatcher had just denied a request from King for Mawhinney to be shown a draft. Armstrong had also opposed showing Mawhinney a draft as he would no longer be able to tell Nally that the talks were wholly confidential.

¹⁵⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, letter from MT to FitzGerald, 4 Oct. 1985.

¹⁵⁹ Please see ‘Bunker Days,’ *Dublin Review of Books*, 2015, available at: <http://www.drb.ie/essays/bunker-days> for an account of the Maryfield Secretariat from some of the people who worked there. See also FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 572-575 and Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, pp. 337-338 for more on the work of the Maryfield Secretariat.

¹⁶⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, letter from MT to FitzGerald, 4 Oct. 1985.

¹⁶¹ Dr. Brian Mawhinney, Parliamentary Private Secretary 1984-1986, Junior Minister at the NIO 1986-1990, Minister of State at the NIO 1990-1992.

¹⁶² TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, letter from Daniell to Wicks, 10 Oct. 1985.

¹⁶³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, note from Powell to MT, undated.

¹⁶⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, minute from Armstrong to MT, 14 Oct. 1985.

Thatcher denied King's request for Mawhinney to come with him to the Armstrong-Nally meetings. 'No,' she noted, 'as indicated on a previous note, it is for Dr. Mawhinney's position that he should not be there.'¹⁶⁵ A draft copy of the agreement did not appear in the press before November because London was vigilant. Thatcher wrote at the top of a memo, 'We must keep the information to a very limited circle.'¹⁶⁶ King was still concerned that the unionist parties had not been officially told about the talks.

During a meeting with Hume, King argued that there was little in the upcoming agreement for unionists. Hume believed that King was 'in danger of bowing to Unionist pressure, that he is caving in.'¹⁶⁷ After meeting King, Dorr reflected that he was disappointed 'at the extent to which he seems to want to play down various points to reduce the extent to which he will be subject to attack from Unionist flank.'¹⁶⁸ As the agreement came closer, Paisley and Molyneaux dug their heels in. They told King they were 'resolutely opposed to any Anglo-Irish Agreement and will see any Agreement as undermining Northern Ireland's position as part of the UK.' King surmised that the two leaders were only trying to get their point across, he doubted there would 'be any histrionics,' but concern over the unionist response was mounting.

Paisley and Molyneaux met with Thatcher on 30 October. King warned Thatcher that although Paisley and Molyneaux were not privy to the Armstrong-Nally negotiations, they had 'gleaned much from leaks in the newspapers.'¹⁶⁹ King advised her to keep the exact details of the talks secret, as Paisley and Molyneaux would take whatever snippet of information they got straight to the press.¹⁷⁰ Whilst London worked on keeping the agreement under wraps, Richard Ryan, a counsellor in the Irish Embassy and Dorr, then Irish Ambassador in London, researched support for the agreement in the Commons.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, letter from Daniell to MT, 10 Oct. 1985.

¹⁶⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, minute from Armstrong to Powell, 11 Oct. 1985.

¹⁶⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/92, meeting with King, 3 Oct. 1985.

¹⁶⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/92, letter from Dorr to Lillis, 17 Oct. 1985.

¹⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1551, minute from King to MT, 25 Oct. 1985. Leaks had appeared throughout the year and was closely monitored by the DFA in Dublin in particular. See NAI, DFA 2015/51/1423.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷¹ Richard Ryan, Counsellor, Irish Embassy in London. Seen as Fine Gael's Trojan horse into the Conservatives, due to his talents as poet and his love of shooting.

Ryan and Dorr asked around quietly to gleam as much information as they could for Lillis. They found that Bruinvels was ‘being courted by Enoch Powell (who is a personal friend), Jim Molyneaux (who presented him last week with a Unionist Party tie: he agreed to become a member of the UUP), Ian Paisley (whom he intensely dislikes), and John Taylor (UUP) (whom he also dislikes).’ Enoch Powell continually tried to rally support for unionists at Westminster. To start to work against an agreement, Bruinvels had been given a list of MP’s who had consented to it. This ‘blacklist’ was based on a *Sunday Express* article from July 1984 and was circulated around conservative benches. Although he recognised that the list was ‘a shabby piece of work,’ Bruinvels told Ryan that it had worried some people.¹⁷² Tim Yeo, MP for South Suffolk, suggested that if Thatcher added Powell to the New Year honours list, he would leave the Commons. ‘Yeo recalled that Powell had told him that his ultimate goal was to gain ‘a seat “in another place”.’ Yeo himself was ‘fully on side’ with the negotiations and was willing to help the other organisers, Bill Cash and Bill Benyon.¹⁷³ Not everyone was receptive to the Dorr-Ryan lobby effort.

Ryan briefly met Norman Tebbit in the Commons. He reacted strongly to Ryan,

Tebbit, who had returned to work in January following Brighton, said there are no normal people in Northern Ireland or in Ireland as a whole. He became quite warm and asked how many casualties we are prepared to take to make this thing work, because that is what it boils down to, and if we have any illusions to the contrary we are bigger fools than he takes us for.¹⁷⁴

Ireland was a sensitive topic that had touched the lives of many in the Commons. Bernard Weatherill, Speaker of the House, was aware that a number of soldiers from his constituency had been killed in Ireland. As a consequence, the majority of his electorate wanted a ‘clean break’ from Ireland or at least ‘some *quid pro quo* for their sacrifice, their contribution.’¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/92, letter from Ryan to Lillis, 7 Oct. 1985. Those on the blacklist were Bruinvels, Bill Benyon, MP for Milton Keynes, John Stradling Thomas, MP FOR Monmouth, Barry Porter, MP for Wirral South, David Crouch, MP for Canterbury, James Fawsey, MP for Rugby and Kenilworth, Marcus Fox, MP for Shipley, Peter Hordern, MP for Horsham, Robert Rhodes-James, MP for Cambridge, Edward Leigh, MP for Gainsborough and Horncastle, Henry Bellingham, MP for Norfolk North-West, Michael Brown, MP for Brigg and Cleethorpes, Anthony Beaumont-Dark, MP for Birmingham Sellyoak, Tom Arnold, MP for Hazel Grove and Richard Needham, MP for Wiltshire North.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/92, letter from Ryan to Lillis, 15 Nov. 1985.

¹⁷⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/87, letter from Ryan to Lillis, 25 Nov. 1985.

By early November, Ryan and Dorr surmised that they could ‘do nothing to warn M.P.s whom we have not yet worked on in depth, or don’t know very well personally, about the possibility of well-poisoning.’ They were a two-man band against a ‘ruthless, narrow and actually rather stupid and blundering’ opposition. They were outnumbered. They felt that the opposition was ‘grim, humourless and pretty well without scruple’ and would do anything to discredit their work. They feared that the Conservative opposition would fling mud ‘in such a way as to make some stick.’ The two wrote to Lillis to tell him that they would continue their lobby and that they were ‘not susceptible to the tactics of folk who are, it seems, only prepared to play as long as they can win.’¹⁷⁶

The Anglo-Irish Agreement, November 1985

On the day of the signing, Thatcher had a major setback. Ian Gow, who had been one of her Northern Ireland advisors and a close personal friend, resigned in protest against the AIA.¹⁷⁷ Gow was a staunch unionist advocate and felt that the AIA was a betrayal by the conservatives. It was a great personal blow to her, so much so that as soon as she landed in Hillsborough, she telephoned Gow to try to persuade him to stay. The call proved unsuccessful.¹⁷⁸ Havers thought this was ‘a crazy thing to do.’ Gow’s resignation was more symbolic as he had started to distance himself from unionism. Havers ‘would have made this clear to the bloody fool if he had only flown a kite, but he didn’t.’¹⁷⁹ Gow’s resignation rattled Thatcher. She became more unsettled as the actual signing approached. She moved furniture around and checked that the painting behind the desk had no political connotations.¹⁸⁰ She also tried to fill time by holding a rehearsal question and answer session with FitzGerald.¹⁸¹ At 2pm, FitzGerald and Thatcher signed the AIA. The ceremony had a few hiccups. Unionist protestors had gathered outside the gates of the Castle and could be heard clearly throughout the afternoon.¹⁸² Also, FitzGerald opened his statement by speaking Irish. King later recalled that he had given no prior warning of this. At a time when Thatcher was already agitated, it

¹⁷⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/92, memo from Ryan to Lillis, 7 Nov. 1985.

¹⁷⁷ Howe, *Conflict of Loyalty*, p. 425. Gow’s resignation letter, and MT’s response, can be found on the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website, <https://www.margarethatcher.org/document/106174>.

¹⁷⁸ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 403 and Aitken, *Power and Personality*, p. 419.

¹⁷⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/87, letter from Ryan to Lillis, 22 Nov. 1985.

¹⁸⁰ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, pp. 334-336.

¹⁸¹ Gillian Shepherd, *The Real Iron Lady: Working with Margaret Thatcher* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013), p. 33.

¹⁸² ‘Anglo-Irish Agreement: 30 years on,’ *The Irish Times* supplement, 14 Nov. 2015.

was ‘a pretty insensitive thing to have done without any warning to us, when neither Margaret nor Geoffrey nor I had the slightest idea what he was saying.’¹⁸³

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how, in spite of being close to the AIA, Thatcher began to disengage from Northern Ireland. She left much of the negotiations with Dublin to her team, headed by Armstrong, and checked in to ensure security remained the top priority. Indeed, Thatcher’s near fixation with security measures becomes obvious during her meetings with FitzGerald. FitzGerald begins to act almost like a teacher when he instructs her that likening an unarmed volunteer police force to the ‘B’ specials is entirely wrong. It becomes obvious that Thatcher did not fully comprehend the history of Northern Ireland, and in response to this she becomes obtuse when discussing it with FitzGerald and her own team. This chapter also further highlights the ongoing problems with the media. As the AIA negotiations continued, the Thatcher government began to clamp down on giving those she deemed terrorists ‘the oxygen of publicity.’¹⁸⁴ The ‘Real Lives’ affair led to accusations of media censorship. This coupled with leaks to the media regarding the AIA ignited tensions within the unionist community, who as we will see in chapter six, responded with outrage to the agreement.

1985 was a remarkable year for Anglo-Irish relations. In spite of FitzGerald’s habit of over-talking, and her personal preference for Haughey, Thatcher learnt to trust FitzGerald. She reportedly ‘... liked the way he did not “tell” everything that had been discussed in private and began to see in him as the first realistic Irish leader with whom she could do business. Thatcher and FitzGerald were polar personalities. She, sharp-witted; he, an absent-minded academic. Earlier in 1985 FitzGerald had become a national laughing stock when he poured salt into his tea. This incident came immediately after he had lost two pairs of glasses whilst out picking holly at Christmas.’¹⁸⁵ The relationship between Dublin and London had suffered its ups and downs, but now they were approaching what would be a pivotal event in the Northern Ireland peace process.

¹⁸³ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 336. According to Dublin’s record of a meeting held between FitzGerald and MT on the morning of the signing, FitzGerald had told MT about the opening paragraph in Irish, NAI, DFA 2015/51/1560, meeting between FitzGerald and MT, 18 Nov. 1985 and NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/52.

¹⁸⁴ MTF, speech to American Bar Association, 15 July 1985.

¹⁸⁵ *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1985.

The AIA ensured that Dublin and London would work together. Gone were the days of headline diplomacy, where newspapers knew more about one government's line of policy. 'Hillsborough seemed to promise an end to Anglo-Irish misunderstanding and held out the possibility of a constructive partnership with Dublin which might prevent Britain getting saddled with international criticism for dealing firmly with the Ulster crisis.'¹⁸⁶ Thatcher committed herself and her government 'to a new departure in Anglo-Irish relations the destination of which she would not be able to determine.'¹⁸⁷ London did not want to fail, '... we must try to avoid finding ourselves in a few years time in a situation in which the agreement had not achieved our objectives.'¹⁸⁸ Even before the AIA was signed, it had achieved its goal of bringing Dublin and London closer together. 'In a sense, the most important achievement of the Agreement was that it removed distrust.'¹⁸⁹ Thatcher and FitzGerald both made sacrifices to come to an agreement. Thatcher had 'dumped' the unionists and 'cut through the labyrinth of Irish politics' while FitzGerald had 'the vision to abandon myth and go for reality.'¹⁹⁰ Britain formally agreed to allow the Irish government to 'assist it henceforth in running the North as part of the United Kingdom.'¹⁹¹ As Goodall surmised, 'Looking back on it, it's not what the Agreement actually achieved at the time that proved significant, but what it led to.'¹⁹²

Thatcher overruled internal and external opposition, from her party and the unionists respectively, in favour of the bigger picture. She permitted her selected team to work on the negotiations instead of going back and forth to FitzGerald herself. This is a marked departure from the image of Thatcher as an autocratic leader. She was prepared to take risks in order to secure a long-term arrangement with Dublin and better security for Northern Ireland. On the later point she was to be bitterly disappointed.

¹⁸⁶ Aughey, 'Conservative Party Policy in Northern Ireland,' ed., by Barton and Roche, p. 140.

¹⁸⁷ *iBid.*, p. 139.

¹⁸⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1549, minute from Hurd to MT, 7 June 1985.

¹⁸⁹ Armstrong, 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement,' ed., by Spencer, p. 52.

¹⁹⁰ *Fortnight*, no. 221, 1985.

¹⁹¹ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/99, comment on the AIA by the Irish Sovereignty Movement, 16 Nov. 1985.

¹⁹² Goodall, 'The Anglo-Irish Agreement,' ed., by Spencer, p. 46.

Chapter 6

‘The Jezebel who sought to destroy Israel in a day’: Implementing the Anglo-Irish Agreement, November 1985- December 1986

This is a treaty which has no clothes. It cannot do what it claims to do. It cannot carry out what it promises.¹

On New Year’s Eve 1985, RUC Constables James McCandless and Michael Williams patrolled the streets of Armagh town. County Armagh was ‘bandit’ country, a PIRA stronghold. Few families had been untouched by the Northern Ireland Troubles, which was about to enter its seventeenth year. As McCandless and Williams passed a litter bin on Thomas Street, the bells of the Cathedral rang in the New Year, 1986. Seconds later two PIRA men, hiding inside a nearby house, detonated a bomb. The two Constables were instantly killed. The PIRA claimed responsibility for the attack later on New Year’s Day, signalling the continuation of its violent campaign. It added that it would continue to kill members of the security forces with “increased efficiency”.²

The 1985 AIA had 15 clauses that aimed to promote ‘lasting peace and stability,’ to recognise and respect the two traditions in Northern Ireland and to encourage dialogue between the unionist and nationalist political parties.³ But Dublin and London were unprepared for the backlash the AIA caused.⁴ The unionist parties, the DUP and OUP, were deeply angered that they had not been consulted about the agreement.⁵ On 17 December 1985, all unionist MPs resigned their Westminster seats.⁶ Throughout 1986, unionist protests against the AIA escalated. There was a day-long strike and a small town in the Republic of

¹ *The Mirror*, 5 Dec. 1985.

² *The Irish Times*, 1 Jan. 1986, *The Belfast Telegraph*, 3 Jan. 1986.

³ Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, November 1985 (with joint *communiqué*), 1985/86 Cmnd. 9657, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁴ PRONI, CENT 3/10, Prime Minister: Northern Ireland, 11 Jan. 1986.

⁵ In this chapter, the term ‘unionist’ will denote members of the DUP, UUP, OUP and their supporters.

⁶ Arwell Ellis Owen, *The AIA, The First Three Years* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), p. 45.

Ireland was ‘invaded.’ This coupled with the continuation of the PIRA’s violent campaign highlighted the failures of the AIA.

In Dublin, FitzGerald was in trouble. His divorce referendum, a key component of his constitutional crusade, was defeated. He managed to survive a vote of no confidence in February and again in October, but it was clear that he was on his way out. Thatcher continued to push for more security while FitzGerald tried to negotiate for three judge courts in Northern Ireland. Far from beckoning a new beginning for Northern Ireland, the AIA had brought about a stalemate. Problems with security cooperation were compounded by collapsed extradition cases throughout 1986 and suspicion surrounding the Stalker Inquiry. The Armstrong-Nally forum had convinced Thatcher to sign the AIA. She now needed to see results.

This chapter will follow the Ulster Unionist protests against the AIA throughout 1986. This is important because, thanks to the release of the PREM and Taoiseach files, for the first time we will be able to understand how these protests were followed in Dublin and London. This chapter also outlines Thatcher’s obvious disappointment in the AIA, which lead to her taking a rather defeatist attitude during her meetings with FitzGerald. This chapter goes beyond any previous analysis of the Thatcher Government’s Northern Ireland policy. Before, historians have written off the years after the AIA due to Thatcher’s disengagement from Northern Ireland policy. Now, we will be able to understand how Anglo-Irish relations in the later 1980s did continue, albeit at a distance when compared to the Armstrong-Nally talks.

Belfast Says No! Unionist Resistance to the AIA

On 23 November 1985, Ian Paisley took to the platform outside Belfast City Hall to address a large crowd of anti-agreement unionists. The AIA had been signed the previous Friday. Thousands of unionists had gathered in city centre to protest against the Agreement. London had hoped that unionists would accept the AIA, as article one guaranteed British sovereignty

over Northern Ireland.⁷ Yet unionists believed that they had been ‘... delivered, bound and trussed like a turkey ready for the oven, from one nation to another nation.’⁸ Paisley addressed the crowd in front of an ‘Ulster says NO!’ banner that was strewn across the front of City Hall. ‘... Thatcher tells us that that Republic must have some say in our province. We say never! Never! Never!’⁹ On 17 December, all unionist MPs resigned their seats in an act of further protest against the AIA. A by-election was called for 23 January 1986. The election was promoted as a referendum on the AIA. Unionists were asked to come out and vote against Dublin’s role in their province. One unionist candidate stood in each electoral area. If an area had no candidates, a dummy, ‘Peter Barry,’ then Irish Foreign Minister, was put forward.¹⁰ Initially, the election results pointed to a unionist victory. All but one of the unionist candidates won their seat. The unionist parties celebrated what they saw as an outright victory. *The Newsletter* led with ‘418,230 loyalists say NO. What now Maggie?’¹¹ However, the result was interpreted differently by Westminster.

Turnout had actually fallen from 73% to 61% as many non-unionists had abstained.¹² The by-election, therefore, did not paint a complete picture of the electorate in Northern Ireland. The UUP also lost the Newry and Armagh seat to the SDLP.¹³ To London the by-election was not an outright failure, nor was it a resounding success. This difference in assessment effectively ‘tarnished any gains that were made in terms of votes cast against the Agreement.’¹⁴ When it was clear that the by-election had failed to impress London, the DUP, led by Ian Paisley, began to organise militant protests.

Thatcher’s government had predicted ‘a range of Unionist responses, ranging from civil disobedience to paramilitary violence.’¹⁵ Ian Gow, who had resigned in protest against the AIA, told the unionist *Belfast Newsletter* that ‘Ulster’s position would be strengthened

⁷ Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, November 1985 (with joint *communiqué*), 1985/86 Cmnd. 9657.

⁸ Cochrane, *Unionist Politics*, p. 28.

⁹ Footage of Paisley’s speech can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_XuQTWZBH0.

¹⁰ Owen, *The AIA*, p. 45.

¹¹ *The News Letter*, 25 Jan. 1986.

¹² TNA UK, PREM 19/1810, Northern Ireland political bulletin, 29 Jan. 1986.

¹³ The results of the Westminster by-elections on 23 Jan. 1986 are available on CAIN, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/rw1986.htm>.

¹⁴ Cochrane, *Unionist Politics*, p. 144.

¹⁵ PRONI, CENT 3/10, Prime Minister: Northern Ireland, 11 Jan. 1986.

by the “restrained and self-disciplined protest through the ballot box”.’ But there was no sign of tempers cooling.¹⁶ Paisley seemed determined to cause as much disruption as possible. Following suit, unionists refused to carry out their duties in local councils, therefore breaking the terms of their government contracts.¹⁷ Tom King sent Thatcher a ‘sombre’ minute that outlined how the AIA had been received in Northern Ireland.¹⁸

Across the board, unionists were outraged by the AIA. Many saw it as ‘a sell-out to Dublin,’ the rest felt it was ‘... a well-meaning but ill-judged attempt which will collapse and lead to less rather than more stability.’ There was no hope of convincing the unionists to accept the AIA, ‘... the best we are likely to obtain is a grudging acquiescence.’ Coupled with this was a difference in approach between Dublin and London. Dublin lacked a sense of urgency in security cooperation. There was also a ‘... wide gulf in perception of the underlying realities of the Northern Ireland situation ...’ But King also felt that Thatcher should stand firm.¹⁹ Kenneth Bloomfield, head of Northern Ireland’s Civil Service, and George Quigley, Permanent Secretary in Dublin’s Department of Finance and Personnel, surmised that unionists had trapped themselves in ‘logical *cul-de-sacs*,’ a cycle of negativity that saw them refuse to take part in negotiations.²⁰ They followed a ‘we will eat grass’ policy. In the end, their obstinacy could ‘bring the whole place down about their ears.’²¹ King shared the bad news with Dublin.

During a meeting with Michael Lillis, King warned that action ‘à la 1974’ was about to happen in Northern Ireland. People had purchased tinned food in anticipation of disruption. The NIO believed that Northern Ireland ‘could be “in flames”.’ King warned that the situation was ‘getting quite dangerous.’²² During an Armstrong/Nally meeting, London warned that violence in Northern Ireland was likely to worsen. The security forces had intercepted carloads of explosives and ammunition. London needed to see a commitment from Dublin

¹⁶ *The Belfast Telegraph*, 7 Jan. 1986.

¹⁷ PRONI, CENT 3/10, Prime Minister: Northern Ireland, 11 Jan. 1986.

¹⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1810, King minute to MT, 10 Jan. 1986.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*,

²⁰ Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, British civil servant. Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service 1984-1991. Sir George Quigley, businessman and British civil servant. Permanent Secretary, Department of Finance and Personnel 1979-1988.

²¹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/16, Bloomfield meeting with Quigley, 28 Jan. 1986.

²² NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, Lillis 980 to O Tuathail, 18 Feb. 1986.

on security co-operation but Dublin argued that security co-operation had improved since the AIA had been signed.²³ Thatcher held a series of meetings towards the end of February to get a sense of how the AIA was received in Dublin and Northern Ireland.

First, she met with FitzGerald. Thatcher still believed that getting greater security co-operation and a move on the ECST would prove to the unionists that the AIA was worthwhile. Thatcher was dejected. She told FitzGerald ‘We might as well not have had the Agreement.’ Criminal activity around border areas continued to be a problem as suspects could easily evade arrest. FitzGerald thought this was ‘absolute nonsense’ and claimed that the Irish army had doubled in size. He believed the RUC Code of Conduct was pivotal to helping the police. Gaining the trust of the minority community would reduce attacks on police officers. He felt the Code and border patrols were key elements of the AIA that were not yet working. To this Thatcher interjected that cross-border security was not working. Could FitzGerald move more Gardaí to patrol the border? FitzGerald again pointed to different techniques and added that if there were issues ‘it should start at the level of the problem, not at Prime Ministerial level.’²⁴

Thatcher was also unhappy with some of the comments from Dublin about the AIA. She asked FitzGerald why his ministers had claimed that the agreement gave Ireland more power than it actually did. This, she said, only further aggravated the unionists. FitzGerald was not aware of any such comments and asked for a list to be produced and sent to him. He added that it was not in their interests to antagonise the unionists further.²⁵ A list produced by London highlighted comments made by FitzGerald, Barry and Dick Spring.²⁶ FitzGerald pointed out that not all blame could be laid on Dublin. King had claimed that the AIA was a guarantee against a united Ireland. Whilst this was partially true, FitzGerald was concerned that there would be ‘considerable furore in the Republic.’ He went on to say that such remarks would cause problems for him in the Dáil, but he would ‘show restraint and decline to make

²³ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, cross-border security co-operation, 17 Feb. 1986.

²⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, FitzGerald meeting with MT, 19 Feb. 1986. London’s record of the meeting is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/1811.

²⁵ *i*Bid., and TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, letter from Powell to Daniell, 19 Feb. 1986.

²⁶ Seven quotes were selected. The list was compiled after the ‘Day of Action’ in March. TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, letter from Ward to Powell, 3 Mar. 1986.

any comment.²⁷ FitzGerald showed that he knew how to deflate Thatcher. Instead of publicly condemning King, he wanted to move on. However, news soon reached him of a gaffe from London.

FitzGerald was due to take the annual St. Patrick's Day trip to the United States. This year was a particularly anticipated visit as it coincided with the retirement of Tip O'Neill.²⁸ Before FitzGerald left, he discovered that Thatcher had sent a message to Reagan requesting that the visit be kept low key with little media coverage. Thatcher denied any knowledge of the message. She told FitzGerald that she had not made the request but someone else may have. She promised to conduct an investigation into the matter as she wanted to know more about it.²⁹ It was discovered that FitzGerald had misinterpreted, or been incorrectly informed of, a request from London to not hand over control of US aid for Northern Ireland at the White House dinner.³⁰ It was explained that to make such a gesture at an exclusively American-Irish dinner would be inappropriate. As it transpired, March 1986 was a difficult month for Anglo-Irish relations.³¹

'This is the little school girl they want to send to England': Dublin and the ECST

Issues with extradition from Ireland to the UK gained prominence due to a number of high profile cases in 1986. The problem for Dublin lay in widespread mistrust of the Northern Ireland justice system. The use of Diplock Courts, with no jury, and supergrasses as witnesses meant that people in Ireland perceived the Northern Ireland system as unfair. Irish law also stated that a person could not be extradited if the crime was politically motivated, something paramilitary prisoners could argue. Although 87 extradition cases had been successfully completed, London believed that Dublin was reluctant to send Irish citizens to trial in the UK.³² This theory seemed to be proven when Evelyn Glenholmes, who had been arrested in Dublin in 1984 on charges relating to the 1981 London bombing, the Harrods bomb and the 1984 Brighton Bomb, was released by a Dublin Court in March 1986. Glenholmes was

²⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, letter from Powell to Budd, 7 Mar. 1986.

²⁸ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 579 and *The Irish Times*, 18 Mar. 1986.

²⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, telephone conversation between FitzGerald and MT, 7 Mar. 1986 London's record of the telephone conversation is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/1812.

³⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, letter from Appleyard to Powell, 7 Mar. and letter from Powell to Appleyard, 10 Mar. 1986.

³¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, minute from Armstrong to MT, 12 Mar. 1986.

³² O'Kane, *Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland Since 1980*, p. 54.

reported to be Britain's most wanted woman, but her warrant was declared invalid. The Dublin Court could not hold Glenholmes as they did not have a new warrant.³³ The result was a much televised chase through the streets of Dublin. Glenholmes, surrounded by friends and supporters, made a dash for a car as plain clothes Special Branch closed in. Television cameras filmed as a bare foot Glenholmes ran into a British Home Stores and was rearrested by Gardaí. Glenholmes was released without charge twice in one day. The 'cock-up' by London meant that a technicality had released a 'dangerous terrorist' back into Ireland. The televised chase and bungled arrest gave the PIRA 'one of their biggest-ever propaganda victories ...'³⁴ Following the Glenholmes incident, Dublin and London agreed to follow a warrant checklist to ensure errors, including spelling mistakes, would be detected.³⁵ Although it was the court that had refused the extradition application, Glenholmes' re-release embarrassed Dublin and irritated Thatcher.

Thatcher later claimed that the Irish judicial system was non-co-operative. Glenholmes' warrant had been rejected 'because ... they claimed that a full stop was missing.'³⁶ Douglas Hurd announced to the Commons that the mistakes in the Glenholmes case had actually been London's fault.³⁷ A third warrant was issued, but Glenholmes had gone into hiding in the Republican safe house network.³⁸ Of all the cases of 1986, that of Glenholmes was exceptional. In future London wanted to ensure that warrants were 'exactly right' and also queried whether the AIIGC could be used to streamline the process.³⁹ But the checklist failed again in August when John O'Reilly, who was wanted for conspiring to murder Civil Servant Kenneth Shimald, was released five minutes after entering a Dublin court. The warrants for O'Reilly were declared invalid because they had been signed by the wrong person.⁴⁰ To prevent further embarrassment, changes needed to be made.

³³ TNA UK, CAB 128/83/13, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet on 25 Mar. 1986.

³⁴ *Munster Express*, 4 Apr. 1986. Footage of Glenholmes release and re-arrest are on YouTube, Vernon Mann ITN News - Britain's 'most wanted woman' for Harrods and Grand Hotel Bombings, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IJRXxnIhA8>.

³⁵ *The Evening Herald*, 14 Apr. 1986. The checklist was completed in 1987. PRONI, NIO 20/27, extradition: checklist for future cases, 3 Aug. 1987.

³⁶ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 405. See also *The Evening Herald*, 23 Mar. 1986, *The Evening Herald*, 24 Mar. 1986.

³⁷ *The Evening Herald*, 25 Mar. 1986.

³⁸ *The Irish Examiner*, 25 Mar. 1986.

³⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, minute from Armstrong to MT, 24 Mar. 1986.

⁴⁰ *The Evening Herald*, *The Irish Press* and *The Cork Examiner*, 14 Aug. 1986.

Dublin had agreed to sign the ECST Bill in order to close the existing extradition loophole, but it was a slow process throughout 1986. Accession to the ECST would show a formal commitment by Dublin to defeating the PIRA.⁴¹ FitzGerald told Thatcher that he would sign the ECST to enable a streamlined extradition of suspects from Ireland to Britain.⁴² In the Dáil, it was put to him that his reason for signing the Convention was due to pressure from London. The move would certainly make working with the unionists easier for Thatcher. Their long held grievance that republican terrorists were able to flee to sanctuary over the border after carrying out an attack would cease.⁴³ FitzGerald maintained that his reason for signing was that every other member of the Council of Europe had already. It was Ireland's turn.⁴⁴

The Unionist Protests Continue

London was aware that unionists had planned a general strike for March.⁴⁵ It was hoped that Thatcher could persuade the unionist leaders to call this off and to opt for dialogue instead. Another aim of the meeting was to get the unionists back to work at district council level.⁴⁶ Budgets were due to be set, if Westminster had to do it they would also have to consider dissolving the current administration. This was to be avoided at such a delicate time. Thatcher was briefed to make it clear that the AIA was set in stone.⁴⁷ There was no possibility of it being abandoned because the unionists disagreed with it.

At her meeting with Paisley and Molyneaux on 25 February, Thatcher maintained that the AIA 'could not be torn up while at the same time demanding that matters revert to

⁴¹ Cunningham, *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland*, p. 62.

⁴² TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, MT meeting with FitzGerald, 19 Feb. 1986 and *The Evening Herald*, 20 Feb. 1986.

⁴³ *The Cork Examiner*, 24 Feb. 1986.

⁴⁴ *The Evening Herald*, 21 Feb. 1986, *The Irish Press*, 21 Feb. 1986.

⁴⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, MT meeting with King, 20 Feb. 1986.

⁴⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, MT meeting with Molyneaux and Paisley, 25 Feb. 1986.

⁴⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, MT speaking cards for meeting with unionists, 25 Feb. 1986. It is interesting to note that in 1986 MT started to bring small note cards into meetings. These are kept within the PREM files. For the Paisley-Molyneaux meeting, MT's cards emphasised the UK's current position. The AIA was non-negotiable. MT noted that she 'Couldn't side-track it even (she) I wanted to.' Her reason for carrying these cards is open to debate. MT perhaps realised that her limited understanding of the Irish problem was obvious when meeting with politicians from Belfast or Dublin. Having a line to stick to probably gave her some confidence when going into meetings, although it meant she was as incorrigible as ever. Another reason may be that she was busy with other matters and was slightly out of touch with Northern Ireland. We know that she felt like the AIA was like 'waving a magic wand,' and 1986 had already thrown up a major difficulty in the Westland Affair. MT was distracted, having these cards focused her attention and gave her something to refer to when the discussion became difficult. From the official synopsis we now that MT stuck to the position on her cards.

the situation which existed beforehand.’ She explained that things were not as bad as they believed. Yes, Dublin now had a limited say in Northern Ireland affairs, but London was still in charge. The Agreement could improve security as London and Dublin could work together to put a stop to cross-border incidents. Thatcher also offered to meet regularly with the unionists to ‘find a way forward.’ Paisley and Molyneaux remained adamant that they would not partake in talks unless the AIIGC was suspended. Thatcher asked Paisley if he had any new ideas, but he did not. He merely repeated that ‘Nobody else had to put up with an (inter-state conference) with an enemy state.’⁴⁸ He felt that the AIA had done more damage than Sunningdale. Thatcher tried to reassure him that the AIIGC was merely an idea-sharing platform, but Paisley was not prepared to listen.⁴⁹ The meeting ended with some hope as Paisley and Molyneaux agreed that they could meet with Thatcher before Easter.⁵⁰ Thatcher later told FitzGerald that there had been a ‘good deal of plain talking’ at the meeting.⁵¹ However, Paisley and Molyneaux changed their position when they got back to Belfast.

Paisley and Molyneaux met with other unionist leaders to discuss their next steps. The leaders were unable to persuade their colleagues to engage with further talks. In fact, they agreed that they would not talk to Thatcher until the AIA had been abandoned. Thatcher was briefed on the speeches Paisley and Molyneaux made in Stormont to the unionist gathering. Molyneaux said he had been ‘very tough’ with Thatcher, when in fact he had taken a back seat during the meeting. He also told the gathering that he had changed his mind about the upcoming ‘Day of Action.’ He now endorsed it as it would prove their opposition to the AIA.⁵² Paisley adopted a similar line. He attacked Brian Mawhinney and King before asking for ‘Schools, shops, transport’ to strike. He warned that ‘Monday was only the beginning.’⁵³ Thatcher was advised that she should use the information cautiously, and if asked she should say that ‘there seems to be evidence of a change of heart since yesterday.’⁵⁴ The unionists were determined to change Thatcher’s mind. They would go ahead with their protests.

⁴⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, MT meeting with Molyneaux and Paisley, 25 Feb. 1986. A record of this meeting is also kept in PRONI, CENT 3/78A.

⁴⁹ PRONI, CENT 3/78A, MT meeting with Molyneaux and Paisley, 25 Feb. 1986.

⁵⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, MT meeting with Molyneaux, Paisley, 25 Feb. 1986.

⁵¹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, letter from MT to FitzGerald, 7 Mar. 1986. A copy of this letter is also kept in PREM 19/1812.

⁵² TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, report from Jim Daniell, NIO, undated.

⁵³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, note on Paisley’s speech after meeting MT, circa. 25 Feb. 1986.

⁵⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, report from Jim Daniell, NIO, undated.

First, they refused to set a rate in Belfast City Council.⁵⁵ Next, Paisley and Molyneaux placed a full-page advertisement in the *Newsletter* entitled 'A call to action.' This was a pre-warning that unionists should be prepared to fight. The advert reasoned that Thatcher had rejected the results of the by-election along with the 'mandated and reasoned case' Paisley and Molyneaux had presented to her at the February meeting.⁵⁶ In an effort to re-inform the public of the facts of the AIA, the NIO also placed advertisements in Northern Ireland newspapers.⁵⁷ The fiction versus fact format of the advert did little to cool unionist tempers. Thatcher's Government had to prepare for the upcoming protests.

A 'Day of Action' was announced in late February.⁵⁸ All unionist people were asked to forego work and/or to come out in protest. The methods of protest ranged from setting up road blocks to joining a march in Belfast. It was difficult for London to predict what the outcome would be. Contingency plans had been put in place before the Paisley-Molyneaux meeting. George Younger, Secretary of State for Defence, agreed for an extra battalion to be sent to Northern Ireland on a temporary basis.⁵⁹ The soldiers would be sent on 13 March, too late to assist with the Day of Action but available if more trouble arose. How many people would take part? Where were the hot-spots likely to be? King warned that most would take part but it was difficult to judge how much support unionists could expect.⁶⁰

Unionists got to work early on 3 March. Between 3am and 6am, it was reported that the M1, the main road into Belfast, had been closed due to an obstruction. A mixture of oil and nails had been spilt over the motorway. The road was cleared by the Army. From 9am to 10am, there was trouble reported in Belfast City centre. An estimated 200 youths attacked the Police in North Belfast. At Gallagher's cigarette factory in Ballymena, female employees were spat at and attacked as they arrived for work. People had shown up for work in

⁵⁵ *The News Letter*, 26 Feb. 1986.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1986.

⁵⁷ TNA UK, CAB 128/83/13, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet on 25 Mar. 1986 and TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, advert placed in unionist newspapers, circa. Mar. 1986.

⁵⁸ *The News Letter*, 26 and 27 Feb. 1986.

⁵⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, letter from King to Younger, 13 Feb. 1986, memo from Younger to King, 24 Feb. 1986 and minute from Mallaby to Powell, 24 Feb. 1986. George Younger, 4th Viscount Younger of Leckie, Conservative MP 1964-1991. Secretary of State for Defence 1986-1989.

⁶⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, letter from Powell to Daniell, 27 Feb. 1986.

nationalist communities but absenteeism was high in unionist areas. At Harland and Wolff only senior management had shown up for work. At lunchtime, Thatcher was passed a highly classified piece of information. She was told that security personnel at Aldergrove airport had been advised to go home. Indeed, many businesses were concerned for staff safety and their journey home as roads were blocked. It was particularly bad in counties Tyrone, Armagh and Down. Kilkeel was reported to be impassable. People had prepared for the strike by purchasing supplies, including milk and bread, the previous day. This meant that supermarkets and bakeries were closed. The big businesses in Belfast City Centre, including Marks and Spencer, were quiet. The strike appeared to lose momentum after lunchtime. Although road blocks were still in operation, the overall turn out to the strike was described as ‘patchy.’ There were rallies in country towns but towards the evening the strike quietened down.⁶¹

The strike reflected badly on the unionists. Images of burnt-out cars were accompanied by reports of gunfire and an attack against the RUC in Belfast.⁶² The violence and damage caused by the protest led the other Northern Ireland parties to turn against the unionist alliance. They were accused of releasing a “monster” onto the streets.⁶³ Thatcher told FitzGerald that she ‘deplored’ the ‘disgraceful tactics’ adopted by unionists.⁶⁴ J.E. McConnell of the NIO’s Political Affairs Division reported to London that the strike had inspired a sense of ‘revulsion’ amongst the protestant community.⁶⁵ One of his contacts told him he was ashamed of the strike. It was clearly sectarian. McConnell also reported that many of his contacts were afraid that the ‘hardmen’ had backed themselves into a corner. They refused to talk so they had to use violence.⁶⁶ It seemed the strike had gotten out of control and the unionists were unsure of what to do next.

Paisley and Molyneaux denounced the Day of Action *post hoc*. They backtracked when they realised it had caused more harm than good. They had little control over the

⁶¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, hourly reports from Day of Action, 3 Mar. 1986.

⁶² *The News Letter*, 4 Mar. 1986.

⁶³ *iBid.*, 5 Mar. 1986.

⁶⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, letter from MT to FitzGerald, 7 Mar. 1986.

⁶⁵ John McConnell, British civil servant. Head of the Political Division of the NIO. A catholic who had King’s confidence, he talked to Dublin and gave them briefings on the situation in Northern Ireland from King’s view.

⁶⁶ PRONI, CENT 1/15/47A, Day of Action - Aftermath, 5 Mar. 1986.

protestors who had resorted to destruction of property and intimidation. The protest did little to commend the unionist position to Westminster or Dublin. Thatcher later wrote in her autobiography that around this time she concluded that ‘... one of the problems of Northern Ireland politics was that it no longer attracted enough people of high calibre.’⁶⁷ It was apparent that there was little room for manoeuvre within unionist political circles. They fell back on their tried and tested methods of mass protest to try to guilt the Conservatives into changing their position. Shortly after the plan was sent to Thatcher, the UUP voted to end their relationship with the Conservative party. The vote was carried with a two-thirds majority. John Taylor, UUP MP for Strangford, said ‘It was a logical move because the unionists were now sitting in opposition to the Conservatives in the Commons and had not taken the Tory Whip since 1972.’ This was a symbolic rupture at a time when the atmosphere between unionism and conservatism was already strained.⁶⁸

Following the unsuccessful Day of Action, there was no clear plan on what to do next.⁶⁹ Sporadic riots began to break out throughout the Province from the beginning of April. These outbursts further proved that Ulster Unionists had no control over their support base. In reaction to this, Paisley and Molyneaux announced a 12-point civil protest plan.⁷⁰ But the plan failed to prevent violence on the streets.

Attacks on RUC officers continued to escalate. By April, Sir Eldon Griffiths, who was a ‘friend’ to Thatcher and had previously written to outline his suggestions for the RUC, asked to meet Thatcher to discuss the problem. He believed,

- that the attacks on the RUC should have been foreseen and preventative action taken,

⁶⁷ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 404.

⁶⁸ *The News Letter*, 26 Apr. 1986.

⁶⁹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, minute from Armstrong to MT, 24 Mar. 1986.

⁷⁰ The 12 points of the plan were 1. Letters would be sent to Area Boards asking for support by adjourning meetings. 2. An invitation to all District Councils to adjourn and to hinder the work of the Commissioner and his colleagues. 3. The possibility of a complete adjournment of the Northern Ireland Assembly should the unionists feel it would advance their campaign. 4. The unionists would continue to abstain from the House of Commons. 5. Setting rates would be delayed. 6. Advertisements explaining the unionist campaign would be placed in major newspapers throughout the United Kingdom. 7. Unionists would call on the support of their supporters in the United States. 8. Meetings and leaflets to raise support for the campaign were being arranged. 9. Economic sanctions would be imposed against Ireland. 10. Protests against any future AIIGC meetings would be stepped up and were already being organised. 11. Unionists would ask their supporters within the RUC to come out against the AIA. 12. A day of prayer would occur on 3 May. 12-point package of opposition to the AIA by the Unionist Party leaders, 23 Apr. 1986. See PRONI, CENT 3/78A.

- that more needs to be done now to protect them;
- that you should see the Police Federation;
- that the Chief Constable is subject to political direction;
- that the RUC should be taken off border security duties.⁷¹

This was to be a tense, ‘unhappy’ meeting.⁷²

Griffiths wanted Thatcher to focus on two objectives, ‘to keep the RUC together and to keep them out of politics.’ Griffiths proposed that Thatcher make a visit to Northern Ireland to unveil a memorial plaque, meet with bereaved families and make a speech on terrorism. Griffiths also felt that the RUC had too much ground to cover. Removing them from border security operations would allow more focus on other areas. Parades posed another problem. Loyalist revellers often clashed with RUC officers whom they knew personally or were related to. They could not ‘give them a tanning on the streets and then meet to drink with them in the evening.’ This sparked revenge attacks as trouble makers knew where officers lived. It was a vicious circle.⁷³

The Police Federation told King that they felt the RUC were the ‘Achilles heel of the (AIA).’ There were instances of officers fleeing their homes. Families had become targets for paramilitaries. More worryingly, people who attacked policemen were protected by their community. Attacks came from both sides of the community as the RUC was seen as a prejudiced force by both sides.⁷⁴ There had been 248 attacks on the families of 226 serving officers. Whilst on duty, ten officers had been shot and 71 had been threatened. The RUC had been drawn into politics by the preferences of the majority of its workforce. A balance needed to be found to ensure the safety of serving officers and their families. The Police Federation also suggested that the government should cover the losses of any officer who had to quickly sell their home after an attack. This was key to improving morale.⁷⁵ As the six-month anniversary of the AIA approached, the security forces anticipated more trouble.

⁷¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, memo from Powell to MT, 21 Apr. 1986.

⁷² TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, memo from Powell to MT, 11 Apr. 1986.

⁷³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, letter from Powell to Daniell, 24 Apr. 1986.

⁷⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, meeting between King and the Police Federation, 15 Apr. 1986.

⁷⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, memo from Booth to MT, 21 Apr. 1986.

On the day of the anniversary on 15 May, the DUP took over the switchboard at Stormont for two-and-a-half hours. They redirected calls and claimed that they had cancelled one call from the Cabinet Office.⁷⁶ After the police realised that some of the MPA's office workers were passing them food and water, they broke the door down with a sledge hammer to clear them out. Between 30,000 and 50,000 Orangemen marched through Hillsborough. The protest passed off peacefully but the small town was blocked off until the crowd dispersed.⁷⁷ Other anti-AIA civilians, who preferred a more symbolic way of showing their displeasure, could purchase a dog chew toy of Thatcher. This sold out within days.⁷⁸ How did Westminster view the second unionist protest?

The day after the six-month protest King told the press that the Northern Ireland assembly could be dissolved in a matter of weeks.⁷⁹ Back in March King had suggested continuing with devolution. Molyneux had told King he would consider entering into discussions but, as has been aforementioned, relations between the UUP and Conservatives were severed in April.⁸⁰ London refused to give in to the strikes. King sent Thatcher a lengthy memo arguing for devolution.⁸¹ This was a risky decision. Not only could it further alienate the unionists, it could also signal that Thatcher's 'Northern Ireland policies have run into a *cul de sac*.'⁸² Another General Election was due in June, such an admittance of failure could weaken Thatcher. The Assembly was due to expire on 20 October 1986.⁸³ To dissolve Stormont would avoid another anti-agreement campaign as seen in the by-elections and would protect the government from further embarrassment. King had to convince Thatcher.

Cabinet agreed that dissolution was the next logical step. But Thatcher was concerned by the consequences of such a move.⁸⁴ The possibility of dissolution had already been leaked to the media. Attached to a minute from King is a clipping from *The Times* which discussed

⁷⁶ BUFVCD, 'Loyalists seize control of Stormont switchboard,' 15 May 1986.

⁷⁷ *The News Letter*, 16 May 1986.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 May 1986.

⁷⁹ BUFVCD, 'Northern Ireland Assembly may soon be dissolved,' 28 May 1986, *The News Letter*, 31 May 1986.

⁸⁰ TNA UK, PREM 19/1812, minute from Armstrong to Powell, 17 Mar. 1986.

⁸¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, from King to MT, undated (possibly 26 or 27 May).

⁸² TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, minute from Howe to MT, 29 May 1986.

⁸³ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, minute from King to MT, undated (possibly 26 or 27 May).

⁸⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, letter from Powell to Daniell, 4 June 1986.

the idea.⁸⁵ King worked to persuade her it was the best chance at progress. His assessment of Stormont, penned in June, was damning. King concluded that Stormont operated as a weekly anti-AIA meeting. Other parties had stopped attending.⁸⁶ John Cushanan, leader of the Alliance Party, told King that even though it would leave him without a salary, he supported the dissolution of the Assembly. London was funding a weekly anti-AIA forum at a cost of £2.8 million per annum. Members were taking a salary without doing any work. The Assembly had damaged public confidence in local politics and King doubted it would cause much fuss if it ended. The marching season was fast approaching, to continue to allow the unionists to use Stormont as a think-tank for anti-agreement protests was inadvisable.⁸⁷ During Cabinet on 12 June, King sought support for dissolution from his colleagues. By funding Stormont, London could be seen as encouraging the anti-agreement campaign. Cabinet therefore agreed that Stormont would be dissolved and an announcement made to the Commons.⁸⁸ The next day, King told a press conference that dissolution had been ‘inevitable.’ ‘We ... had a situation in which an assembly, set up and approved by parliament with funds by parliament to discharge two functions, was actually discharging neither.’⁸⁹ Unionists were further outraged.

As James Kilfedder, Speaker of the Assembly at Stormont, read out the dissolution order on 23 June, he was met with shouts of ‘Ulster Says No!’ *The Newsletter* wrote that Stormont ‘died’ that afternoon.⁹⁰ The next day, Paisley warned that Northern Ireland was on the verge of Civil War. He urged all protestants to,

... get in touch with his neighbour; every street needs to be organised; every area needs to be organised; every town and hamlet and townland needs to be organised. And that’s exactly what’s going to happen in this province ... And this is a war. And let no one mince words about it. This is no garden party or picnic, and people will be hurt.⁹¹

⁸⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, minute from King to MT, undated (possibly 26 or 27 May) and *The Times*, 29 May 1986.

⁸⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/1814, letter from Powell to Daniell, 4 June 1986.

⁸⁷ TNA UK, CAB 129/221/8, dissolution of the Northern Ireland Assembly, memorandum by SOS King, 10 June 1986.

⁸⁸ TNA UK, CAB 128/83, minutes of Full Cabinet, 12 June 1986.

⁸⁹ BUFVCD, ‘Northern Ireland Assembly dissolved,’ 13 June 1986. See also Cunningham, *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland*, p. 51.

⁹⁰ *The News Letter*, 24 June 1986.

⁹¹ BUFVCD, ‘Ian Paisley calls for mobilization against (AIA),’ 24 June 1986.

Talks between Dublin and London continued throughout 1986. These contacts proved pivotal as the shortcomings of the AIA became obvious. FitzGerald complained that King was ‘too adversarial.’ The personal relationship between King and Barry was said to be poor due to their ‘hard-hitting’ negotiation techniques and Barry’s green tinge. Both men agreed to work out their differences, but temperament still played a pivotal part in Anglo-Irish relations after the agreement was signed. Thatcher was advised to keep away from personalities and stick to the issues, as were her ministers.⁹²

Barry and King continued to meet but their conversations were contentious. Barry said that the AIA was viewed as ‘worthless’ as there was little evidence of results. FitzGerald had signed the ECST in February, but the Glenholmes incident had occurred a month later. London wanted more security co-operation but Dublin needed something in return. The suspension of John Stalker, Assistant chief Constable to the Greater Manchester Police, at the beginning of June had caused a media storm.⁹³ Stalker had been tasked with investigating a supposed shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland in 1984. Stalker had investigated three incidents; the deaths of three PIRA men, Gervaise McKerr, Sean Burns and Eugene Toman, at a checkpoint in Lurgan on 11 November 1982; the death of Michael Tighe on 24 November 1982; and the deaths of Seamus Grew and Roddy Carroll on 12 December 1982.⁹⁴ Each incident involved the RUC using lethal force. Security personnel in Northern Ireland were issued with a yellow card that clearly instructed them to use their firearms as a last resort.⁹⁵ All three incidents in the Stalker enquiry had raised concerns over the RUC’s interpretation of minimum force. McKerr, Burns and Toman were unarmed but had been shot at 109 times; Tighe, Grew and Carroll were armed but had not discharged their weapons. Stalker was due to give his final report but was suddenly removed from the inquiry on 5 June and suspended

⁹² TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, minute from Powell to MT, 18 Feb. 1986.

⁹³ John Stalker, Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester Police 1979-1987.

⁹⁴ Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth, *The Crowned Harp: Policing Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto, 2000), p. 132. Stalker also wrote about his investigation, suspension and suspicions in John Stalker, *Stalker: Ireland, Shoot to Kill and the Affair* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988).

⁹⁵ Please see appendix one for images of a yellow card.

from the police.⁹⁶ Dublin had known that an investigation into the RUC was underway and had quietly asked for updates on its progression.⁹⁷

Michael Lillis told an official from the NIO that Dublin wanted to see London act decisively in the Stalker case. Dublin saw it ‘as an opportunity to demonstrate to the minority community that the British police system was “objective and fair”.’ Lillis then implied that ‘... prosecuting those responsible for collusion would mean that the Irish would feel confident enough to back off from their demands for the Police complaints procedure, something that had proven to be a thorny issue in the recent past.’ The NIO official reflected that Lillis ‘clearly felt very strongly’ about the Stalker case.⁹⁸ Barry asked King for more information on what had happened. Dublin suspected that Stalker had been suspended because he was too close to the truth. Senior RUC officers had been implicated. ‘There was something of a stink about the whole affair’ and Dublin felt that decisive action needed to be taken before the PIRA used it as a propaganda tool.⁹⁹

King complimented Barry on his handling of Northern Ireland in the Dáil. He admired his combination of ‘patience plus a latent impatience.’ Barry ‘smiled’ but reflected that he could not rely on trickery when discussing Northern Ireland anymore. Both governments needed results that went beyond the existence of the AIIGC. Barry told King that unless three-man courts were introduced, ‘It would be extremely difficult’ to implement the ECST until late 1986.¹⁰⁰ Until then, FitzGerald worked on another change for Ireland.

A major part of FitzGerald’s constitutional crusade was to implement a divorce referendum. A win on this would put Ireland in line with its modern European neighbours. More importantly, it would announce to protestants in Northern Ireland that Ireland was not strictly catholic. Early opinion polls showed that the majority were in favour of divorce, but

⁹⁶ Ellison and Smyth, *The Crowned Harp*, pp. 119-121 and Mulcahy, *Policing Northern Ireland: Conflict*, pp. 71-74.

⁹⁷ FitzGerald was briefed on the report before meeting MT in February 1986. The brief speculates on the outcomes of the Stalker inquiry and instructs FitzGerald to ask MT about UDR patrols. See NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65.

⁹⁸ PRONI, CENT 1/15/40A, meeting between Lillis and Elliott, 30 June 1986.

⁹⁹ FOI 0231-17, working breakfast with Barry, 8 June 1986 and PRONI, CENT 1/15/40A, Stalker and the Irish, 30 June 1986.

¹⁰⁰ FOI 0231-17, working breakfast with Barry, 8 June 1986.

an unexpected shift occurred at the voting stations.¹⁰¹ The proposal won 36.5% of the public vote, a humiliating defeat for FitzGerald.¹⁰² In Northern Ireland there was little surprise at the outcome. Some unionists said ‘it showed that Éire was still in the 19th century.’¹⁰³ The question shifted from if FitzGerald was to exit from the Taoiseach’s office, to when.¹⁰⁴

The Marching Season, Summer 1986

London was aware of plans to parade through a catholic area in Portadown.¹⁰⁵ Paisley asked that every unionist go to Portadown to ‘insist on their right to march through catholic areas ...’¹⁰⁶ The Portadown parade was reported as being the only one that had not been peaceful.¹⁰⁷ Paisley’s increasingly provocative speeches riled the PIRA. The PIRA escalated their campaign by attacking contractors who worked for the security forces. They also extended their threat to any civilian who had links with the security forces. They sought to provoke the protestant community. The death of a UDR Sergeant on the Shankill Road in Belfast triggered a series of tit-for-tat murders between loyalists and republicans. Although a number of people thought to be responsible were caught, the situation was not easy to control.¹⁰⁸ The Libyans had announced their support for the PIRA in July. They had sent money and would be caught sending arms in 1987 (see chapter seven).¹⁰⁹ Cabinet believed Paisley was the root-cause of the attacks on nationalist areas.¹¹⁰ King was furious over the Portadown parade. He blamed ‘hooligans’ who had been called out to cause trouble and interrupt the Orange Order’s annual parade.¹¹¹ But actions by the DUP proved that faceless hooligans were not wholly to blame for disturbing the peace.

On 7 August Peter Robinson, Deputy Leader of the DUP, led 200 supporters to the small town of Clontibret, County Monaghan.¹¹² The event was meant to highlight the lack of

¹⁰¹ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 630.

¹⁰² *The Irish Times*, 3 July 1986.

¹⁰³ *The News Letter*, 27 June 1986.

¹⁰⁴ *iBid.*, 28 June 1986.

¹⁰⁵ TNA UK, CAB 128/83/26, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 3 July 1986.

¹⁰⁶ TNA UK, CAB 128/83/27, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 10 July 1986.

¹⁰⁷ *The News Letter*, 7 July 1986.

¹⁰⁸ TNA UK, CAB 128/83/31, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 18 Sept. 1986.

¹⁰⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, letter from Lillis to O Tuathail, 3 July 1986.

¹¹⁰ TNA UK, CAB 128/83/27, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 10 July 1986.

¹¹¹ *The News Letter*, 15 July 1986.

¹¹² Peter Robinson, DUP MP 1979-2010. Leader of the DUP 2008-2015, First Minister of Northern Ireland 2008-2016.

security at the border but ultimately ended in failure. The RUC had tipped off the Garda that a large crowd was moving across the border. When two Gardaí arrived at Clontibret, they were attacked by the group. The crowd also vandalised the local Garda station. They smashed windows and painted “Ulster has awakened” on the front of the building. Robinson was arrested and charged with a variety of crimes including actual bodily harm. The Clontibret invasion caused London serious embarrassment. An official apology was sent from London to Dublin.¹¹³ Barry strongly condemned the ‘charade.’ He said it ‘would have been laughable if it had not resulted in a vicious assault on two members of the Garda Síochána and damage to Garda property.’¹¹⁴ Dublin learnt through a secret source that the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), a Loyalist paramilitary group, had decided not to support Robinson’s invasion. They wanted to see if he could “fend for himself entirely”.¹¹⁵ Paisley’s Deputy had attempted to upstage him while he was out of the country, and now had a criminal record. King was growing impatient with the unionist pact.

King realised by September 1986 that persuading the unionists of the benefit of the AIA was a ‘waste of time.’¹¹⁶ The Stalker affair had eroded confidence in the security forces, particularly the RUC, in both communities. In September the affair was ‘still festering away, leaving a bad taste.’¹¹⁷ Cracks had appeared in the unionist pact that could be exploited by London.¹¹⁸ Dublin was also trying to piece a plan together.

Bishop William McCappin, who was ‘unhappy’ with the AIA, tried to describe the reality of life in Northern Ireland during a meeting with Richard Ryan.¹¹⁹ McCappin felt that relations between Catholics and Protestants were ‘excellent.’ The trouble was caused by strangers. He specifically blamed ‘DUP hooligans from Belfast.’ McCappin explained his point with an anecdote,

¹¹³ *The News Letter*, 8 Aug. 1986, Owens, *The AIA*, pp. 94-95.

¹¹⁴ *The News Letter*, 9 Aug. 1986.

¹¹⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, O’Leary/Hadden initiative, 6 Nov. 1986.

¹¹⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, letter from O Ceallaigh to O Tuathail, 11 Sept. 1986.

¹¹⁷ FOI 0231-17, King meeting with Barry, 7 Sept. 1986.

¹¹⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, letter from O Ceallaigh to O Tuathail, 11 Sept. 1986.

¹¹⁹ Bishop William McCappin, Church of Ireland Bishop of Connor 1981-1987.

... an Orangeman ... wished to take part in the Twelfth parade in Newtownards but was worried that he would not be (able) to bring in the silage on his farm. He went to Newtownards regardless - and, on his return, found that two Catholic neighbours had done the job for him!¹²⁰

McCappin's information was important. Although large numbers had attended the anti-agreement parades and riots, the vast majority of protestants and/or unionists did not respond to Paisley's cries for war.¹²¹ Ryan later met with John Houston, Political Advisor to Geoffrey Howe, who felt that there was '... little or no evidence of intelligent leadership emerging anywhere in the Unionist ranks ...' Houston also felt that the strain between Howe and Thatcher, caused by her South African policies, could cause problems for Anglo-Irish relations. Howe was still her main advisor on Northern Ireland. Without him Thatcher could stall.¹²² McConnell felt that tensions in Northern Ireland might subside after the marching season but there could be a new push in the Autumn.¹²³

Fred Catherwood, a Northern Ireland born MEP, suggested setting up a short-term round-table conference to open up dialogue between Dublin, London and Belfast.¹²⁴ Catherwood recommended the conference to run until the next AIIGC in November.¹²⁵ This would hopefully dispel tensions in the lead up to the first anniversary of the AIA. Andrews felt that Catherwood's plan was a good idea but knew it would need to be coupled with a concession to the unionists to tempt them to the table. He suggested a review of the AIA if 'stringent conditions were satisfied.' By this he probably meant if unionists agreed to stop protesting. Such an idea was not without its issues. Andrew's recognised that nationalists would see a review of the AIA as a setback, a 'surrender to the Orange card,' but all would benefit if unionists would stop stirring the pot.¹²⁶ Catherwood felt that what was needed was to tilt the playing field back in the direction of the unionists. It was now tilted away from them. The question of balance was all important. At the same time, he admitted that

¹²⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, meeting with Bishop William McCappin, 10 Sept. 1986.

¹²¹ *iBid.*

¹²² NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, dinner with Houston, 19 Sept. 1986.

¹²³ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, letter from O Ceallaigh to O Tuathail, 11 Sept. 1986.

¹²⁴ Sir Fred Catherwood, Northern Ireland born Conservative MP 1979-1994. Owens, *The AIA*, p. 26.

¹²⁵ *The Irish Times*, 20 Sept. 1986.

¹²⁶ PRONI, CENT 3/68A, AIA, 25 Sept. 1986.

nationalist gains from the Agreement could not be compromised.¹²⁷ Catherwood's idea was met with some criticism.

Speaking on a personal level, Archbishop Robin Eames, Church of Ireland Primate of all Ireland, warned that Catherwood was "in this only for his own ends".¹²⁸ To his mind, Catherwood put forward proposals for "Personal glorification" and because of this, Paisley and Molyneaux had lost confidence in him. Eames was also critical of Catherwood's premature announcement as the round-table was not ready. His proposal was therefore 'dead,' destroyed by its own creator.¹²⁹ Professor Con O'Leary, an Irish born academic, also sent a proposal.¹³⁰ O'Leary had taken an interest in unionism and had even served as an advisor to the UDA. He was also often called upon by the media to explain the ins and outs of Northern Ireland politics.¹³¹ O'Leary made five suggestions,

1. Suspend all AIIGC meetings for three months, or until talks between Dublin, Belfast and London had concluded.
2. Close the Secretariat office at Maryfield until the talks conclude.
3. Review rights of nationalist and unionist communities in Northern Ireland.
4. Look again at Articles two and three of the Irish Constitution.
5. If an revised Agreement is produced, submit it to a referendum.¹³²

David Goodall commended O'Leary's ideas but said that he could not put his name to them. They amounted to a suspension of the AIA which Thatcher would not entertain. She could not be seen to bend to unionist demands. Goodall wished O'Leary 'good luck' but said the proposals could not be implemented in their current form.¹³³

¹²⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, conversation with Catherwood, 13 Oct. 1986.

¹²⁸ Archbishop Robin Eames, Anglican Bishop. Primate of all Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh 1986-2006.

¹²⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, meeting with Archbishop Eames, 15 Oct. 1986.

¹³⁰ Dr. Cornelious 'Con' O'Leary, political historian and commentator. Worked at Queen's University Belfast. Was from the Republic of Ireland but developed a keen interest in unionism.

¹³¹ *The Irish Times*, 23 Sept. 2006. This paper was co-authored with Professor Hadden, however O'Leary travelled to meet with officials to discuss the 5 points alone.

¹³² NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, Hadden/O'Leary Initiative, 24 Oct. 1986.

¹³³ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, discussion between Goodall and O'Leary, 24 Oct. 1986.

October-December 1986

Although FitzGerald wanted to uphold the AIA, in October he told *The Belfast Telegraph*, ‘One of the curious misconceptions in Northern Ireland is that we want to be involved to the extent that we are.’¹³⁴ Fine Gael’s interest in Northern Ireland was the elimination of the PIRA.¹³⁵ FitzGerald wanted to reassure unionists that a united Ireland was not on Fine Gael’s agenda. What did Dublin want? FitzGerald told Gow, ‘We want to destroy the IRA which threatens both our countries.’ FitzGerald warned that Sinn Féin would continue to make political gains which would leave the SDLP at the wayside. His fear was that civil war could erupt if Sinn Féin produced a mandate. It was time to ‘get through to the unionists’ the truth behind the agreement. Irish nationalism had made changes to implement the agreement, which guaranteed the wishes of the majority in Northern Ireland.¹³⁶ Unionists needed to accept the AIA for what it really was.¹³⁷ Before the first anniversary, and the anticipated unionist protests, Thatcher and FitzGerald had another meeting.

FitzGerald was concerned that the UDR were still deployed in Northern Ireland. They were a divisive presence (see chapter 5). Thatcher was adamant that the UDR was essential while the violence continued. Withdrawing them would endanger more lives whilst the ‘blasts, the deaths and the bombings’ continued. Thatcher was ‘depressed’ that security along the border had not improved. She had expected violence to be defeated by the AIA, but it had escalated instead. Thatcher’s next comment reflects her overall sense of frustration with Northern Ireland. FitzGerald remarked that border areas were difficult because they were almost impossible to patrol. He said, ‘It is not the border that we would prefer!’ She retorted, ‘Yes, we got it wrong in 1921.’ This was a startling admission from Thatcher. Did she mean that a united Ireland would have been better? Or was she referring to redrawing the border. The clue lies in further comments during the discussion.

¹³⁴ *The Belfast Telegraph*, 30 Oct. 1986.

¹³⁵ *The Irish Times*, 31 Oct. 1986.

¹³⁶ Jennifer Todd, ‘Institutional Change and Conflict Regulation: The Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985) and the Mechanisms of Change in Northern Ireland,’ *West European Politics*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2011), pp. 838-858.

¹³⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, meeting between FitzGerald and Gow, 12 Nov. 1986. FitzGerald also told Gow that he knew London had spoken directly to the PIRA in 1981. He made it clear that he was against this, but had not brought it up before due to ‘Irish politeness.’

FitzGerald told an anecdote of a man whose house straddled the border. The RUC tried to arrest him ‘by using an entrance which was in the South, even though it was the most northerly part of the house!’ As so often happened, Thatcher did not pick up on the joke. She curtly replied that towns close to the border, like Dundalk, were common places for suspects to hide from the RUC. FitzGerald said that law abiding people had also moved to the Republic of Ireland to live and work, but added, ‘We have 200 people from the North in our jails. You can have them back any time you want.’ Thatcher replied, ‘I don’t want them. You can have all the Nationalists in the North if you like.’ The conversation concluded with a reflection from Thatcher on the pressures she faced in the upcoming 1987 election. She also added, ‘rather with a wistful reference ... whether she could continue, in all seriousness, to send young men to their death in Northern Ireland.’¹³⁸ Houston reported to Richard Ryan that Thatcher was “‘a bit fed up about the whole thing ... She doesn’t see where it’s going ... She doesn’t see what’s coming out of it’.”¹³⁹

Where once she referred to Finchley and Northern Ireland as one, now there was a definite separation reflected not only in her attitude but in her choice of words. ‘I don’t want them’ was her response to transferring British citizens from Irish jails. ‘They’ were more trouble than they were worth. Moore recalls a private conversation with Thatcher along similar lines,

She went on about Ulster and how the Unionists had persecuted the minority and how she couldn’t send ‘wave after wave’ of young men to look after the place ... She was sparky. She referred to matters of Ulster as ‘foreign affairs.’ I asked her how her devotion to the British nation could justify her sort of behaviour. She said human rights mattered more than anything else.¹⁴⁰

FitzGerald later recalled another example of this shift following the AIA. Whilst discussing grants from Europe and the USA for Northern Ireland, Thatcher rebuffed,

¹³⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, FitzGerald meeting with MT, 6 Nov. 1986.

¹³⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, dinner with John Houston, 9 Nov. 1986.

¹⁴⁰ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 338.

“More money for these people?” She said waving her hand in the general direction of Northern Ireland. “Look at their schools; look at their roads. Why should they have more money? I need that money for my people in England, who don’t have anything like this”.¹⁴¹

Her reflection on whether she could continue to send the Army to Northern Ireland is perhaps a reflection of the guilt she felt over the increasing attacks and deaths. It had all started during her first few months as Prime Minister with the Warrenpoint ambush and the assassination of Mountbatten. In public she had maintained that she would stop these attacks and protect ‘her boys.’ She knew she had failed. Thatcher’s unionism, from this point on, is best described as an English unionism.¹⁴²

She saw Northern Ireland in terms of them and us. Her English unionism is illustrated by her concern for the plight of ‘our boys’ in the British army. She also saw Northern Ireland as an economic drain on the rest of the UK.¹⁴³ Thatcher’s own weariness with the Ulster Unionists, particularly during the 1986 anti-AIA protests, is another important factor in this English Unionism. ‘Thatcherism did not seek to conserve the fragile web of understood relationships ... that make up the Conservative nation.’¹⁴⁴ So when the Ulster Unionists reacted to the AIA with protests, vandalism and mass riots, Thatcher likened them to a threat to a threat to ‘the body politic.’ Just as the PIRA paramilitary prisoner was ‘invisible,’ so too were the Ulster Unionists.¹⁴⁵ Indeed the protests ‘exposed the Unionist mainstream not merely as politically ineffectual but as intellectually feeble also.’¹⁴⁶ With the first anniversary of the AIA approaching, things were not about to improve in Northern Ireland.

Instability and extremism had led to an overwhelming atmosphere of frustration in Northern Ireland. ‘... people saw no hope and ... were allowing the stagnation and instability to continue, if not grow worse.’¹⁴⁷ A source told Dublin that inside UUP headquarters

¹⁴¹ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 568.

¹⁴² Cunningham, *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland*, p. 48.

¹⁴³ Dixon, *Northern Ireland*, p. 197.

¹⁴⁴ Camilla Schofield, ‘A nation or no nation? Enoch Powell and Thatcherism,’ in Jackson and Saunders *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, p. 123.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

¹⁴⁶ Colin Coulter, ‘British Rights for British Citizens’: The Campaign for ‘Equal Citizenship’ for Northern Ireland,’ *Contemporary British History* vol. 29, no. 4 (2015), pp. 496-507.

¹⁴⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/16, meeting between Donlon and Bloomfield, 8 Oct. 1986.

members felt they were being ‘lost’ to the DUP. The UUP were ‘...in turmoil with no direction and a nauseating belief that their decisions are being forced on them by Paisley, Robinson and the DUP.’¹⁴⁸ The only thing uniting the Unionist parties was their antipathy towards the AIA. Ivor Oswald, Managing Director of Alliance and Leicester Building Society and Chairman of the Northern Ireland Building Societies, described their pact as a ‘tatty policy’ that was ‘held together by the forlorn hope of a future hung parliament where they might possibly negotiate an end to their nightmare.’¹⁴⁹ Dublin concluded that the best thing to do was to ride out the storm. The unionists would eventually run out of puff. This would have to be done sensitively. They did not want to ‘take or agree to steps that would be seen by nationalists and by unionists alike as a victory for unionist intransigence or as a setback to the efforts to put Northern nationalists on a footing of equality.’¹⁵⁰

In anticipation of the first anniversary of the AIA, people had bought supplies, including camping gas cylinders, in case there was serious disruption. It was thought that the village of Ballylumford would be completely closed.¹⁵¹ In *The News Letter*, Molyneaux and Paisley had placed an advertisement calling for the unionist people to come and ‘show it’s still **NO!** At the City Hall, Belfast ...’ With a large unionist readership, it was anyone’s guess how many would show up. *The News Letter* also reported that a loyalist fighting force had been sworn in, its members vowing to “take whatever steps are necessary” to oppose the AIA.¹⁵² The new force was called Ulster Resistance. The problem with the unionist campaign in 1986 was that it was the same old story. They may have felt they were being radical in setting up a new citizens army and inviting the loyal and the faithful to Belfast City Hall for a protest, but it had all been done before.¹⁵³ Paisley and Molyneaux relied on long memory and hoped to stir up the same level of outrage that was present during the home rule crises. People were weary. The Troubles were approaching their twentieth anniversary and the tired tactics of the unionists were doing little to inspire ordinary people. *The News Letter* did its

¹⁴⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, meeting with Ivor Oswald, 25 Nov. 1986 and NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, letter from O’Ceallaigh to O Tuathail, 15 Oct. 1986.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, attempts to break the stalemate r.e. inter-party talks on devolution in Northern Ireland, 14 Oct. 1986.

¹⁵¹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, Agreement anniversary protests, 10 Nov. 1986.

¹⁵² *The News Letter*, 11 Nov. 1986. Bold font in original article.

¹⁵³ Cochrane, *Unionist Politics*, pp. 156-164.

best to drum up support immediately before the City Hall rally, leading with stories on the ‘Accord that gave birth to murder and mayhem’ and claiming that ‘Thousands ... still (say) no!’¹⁵⁴ But would ‘thousands’ show up on the day?

The anniversary of the AIA arrived and, once again, the protest descended into chaos. During a riot in North Belfast one protestor was killed after being knocked down by a Police Land Rover.¹⁵⁵ An elderly pensioner dropped dead after a bottle was thrown through her living room window.¹⁵⁶ Towards the end of Paisley’s speech at City Hall he called for calm as the outer crowd began to throw stones.¹⁵⁷ His plea failed and some of the crowd then damaged and looted the City Centre stores.¹⁵⁸ 48 RUC men were injured, two in Portadown had acid thrown in their eyes.¹⁵⁹ Robinson claimed that unionists were not ‘revolutionists, or anarchists, or murderers’ but stories in the media proved otherwise.¹⁶⁰ ‘Mass demonstrations produced a sense of solidarity, but they were unpredictable and often degenerated into mindless delinquency.’¹⁶¹ Once again, the protest served to irritate Thatcher.

She did not take kindly to Paisley calling her a traitor, indeed Jim Prior felt that doing so was a ‘great tactical mistake.’ Instead of changing her mind, labelling her as treacherous entrenched her. Even Dublin felt that if the unionists had rephrased and told her she was ill informed her natural inquisitiveness would have induced her to talk.¹⁶² Paisley’s comments instead reinforced the image of Northern Ireland as a place apart, a volatile province that required a firm hand.¹⁶³ She was dismissive of the day’s events. She was at Camp David in Maryland having talks with Ronald Reagan and was more concerned with discussing NATO and nuclear weapons than the fracas in Northern Ireland. She was asked if the AIA had been discussed, she said it had not. ‘My thoughts on the Agreement are the same as they were

¹⁵⁴ *The News Letter*, 14 and 15 Nov. 1986.

¹⁵⁵ *The Irish Times*, 15 Nov. 1986.

¹⁵⁶ *The Irish Press*, 17 Nov. 1986.

¹⁵⁷ *The Irish Times*, 16 Nov. 1986.

¹⁵⁸ *The Evening Herald*, 16 Nov. 1986, *The News Letter*, 17 Nov. 1986.

¹⁵⁹ *The Evening Herald*, *The Cork Examiner* and *The Irish Examiner*, 17 Nov. 1986.

¹⁶⁰ BUFVCD, ‘Loyalist protest against the AIA,’ 14 Nov. 1986.

¹⁶¹ Arthur, *Special Relationships*, pp. 225-228.

¹⁶² NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/87, letter from Dorr to Lillis, 21 Nov. 1985.

¹⁶³ Colin Coulter, ‘Direct Rule and the Unionist Middle Classes,’ in *Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture*, ed., by Richard English and Graham Walker (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 182.

when I made the Agreement.’¹⁶⁴ Keith Raffan, MP for Delyn, reported that there were ‘ripples of disenchantment’ through the back-benches at Westminster.

Raffan told Ryan that the AIA had failed and there was clearly no quick solution. He said that if only the unionists were ‘smart enough’ they would realise that back-benchers were open to a ‘reasonable’ campaign from them if they returned to the Commons.¹⁶⁵ Tim Edgar, MP for Enfield North, felt there was a definite sense of ‘hopelessness’ in Westminster. The AIA had not solved the Irish problem. It had exacerbated it.¹⁶⁶ Viscount Long, a Senior Whip for the Conservatives, told Dorr that he was “very turned off” by the unionist’s bitter language.¹⁶⁷ To have a senior Conservative MP ridicule the anti-AIA campaign was incredibly damaging, especially given that it was spoken to a key member of FitzGerald’s Government. Tom Sackville, MP for Bolton West, who had just been made Private Secretary to the Minister for Northern Ireland, said that he and his fellow MP’s were alarmed by the behaviour of the unionists. He said they “bellowed and howled” and when he asked them to stop, they grew louder. The MP’s were ‘appalled’ and ended up saying ‘that if they and their associates never came back to Westminster, they would not be missed.’¹⁶⁸ Brian Mawhinney reported that on a flight to Belfast, Paisley and Robinson had stonewalled him, hardly the behaviour one would expect of a political leader and his deputy.¹⁶⁹ The unionist campaign had also impacted public opinion in Britain.

The *Daily Mirror* launched a ‘Britain out of Ireland’ campaign that focused on British Army losses and depicted Northern Ireland as a war-torn wasteland beyond help. One in four houses were ‘unfit for human habitation’ and an entire generation was in prison.¹⁷⁰ Even *The Belfast Telegraph* recognised the divide between Northern Ireland and life in mainland Britain. British people did not understand the problems there, nor did they care.¹⁷¹ Unionists had tried to appeal to British people by launching a new campaign, but the “No”

¹⁶⁴ MTF, press conference, 15 Nov. 1986.

¹⁶⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, lunch with Keith Raffan (M.P.), 18 Nov. 1986.

¹⁶⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/97, lunch with Eggar (FCO), 20 Oct. 1987.

¹⁶⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2015/89/87, letter from Dorr to Lillis, 21 Nov. 1985.

¹⁶⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, lunch with Tom Sackville, M.P., 9 Dec. 1986.

¹⁶⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, lunch with Mawhinney, 19 Nov. 1986.

¹⁷⁰ *The Daily Mirror*, advert for Britain out of Ireland group, circa Nov. 1986.

¹⁷¹ *The Belfast Telegraph*, 22 Nov. 1985.

movement had ‘annoyed and confused supporters in Great Britain.’¹⁷² London and Dublin needed to continue to communicate if a solution was to be found.

A few days after the first anniversary protest, Paisley and Molyneaux met with Neil Kinnock and Peter Archer from the Labour Party.¹⁷³ Paisley and Molyneaux claimed to be ‘depressed.’ It seems they had realised that their protests were futile. Their reason for travelling to London was to show that they had ‘one line at least open to the outside world.’ They realised meeting with Labour was essentially pointless as they too supported the AIA, but they felt that Labour were at least straight shooters. The Conservatives had pretended ‘to be their friend and to be for the Union, but (they were) in fact their enemy ...’ Kinnock and Archer felt that the unionists were now open to discussing power sharing with the SDLP, but that they were unsure how to proceed.¹⁷⁴ The meeting was low key. Indeed there was little media comment on it, but it gave Dublin and London a glimmer of hope.¹⁷⁵

While in London for the opening of a Kilkenny Designs store, FitzGerald briefly met with King.¹⁷⁶ King told FitzGerald that unionists were still complaining about the border. He had continually been told “‘just look at all those IRA terrorists strutting around in the Republic and nothing is done to lock them up”.’ FitzGerald had signed the ECST in February, but he needed to pass it into law. FitzGerald said he was confident that the Bill would pass through the Dáil before Christmas 1986, as long as he could get the support of the Progressive Democrats. King, perhaps in the interest of flattery, told FitzGerald that he was ‘lost in admiration’ at how quickly Dáil business was handled.¹⁷⁷ The Extradition Bill was passed, by a narrow majority, in the Dáil on 18 December 1986. The loophole, that political crimes were exempt from extradition, was closed.¹⁷⁸ The ECST Bill, however, was not convened until 1988 (see Epilogue). Alongside extradition was the old issue of security cooperation.

¹⁷² *The News Letter*, 19 Sept. 1986.

¹⁷³ Neil Kinnock, Baron Kinnock, Labour MP 1970-1995. Leader of the Labour Party 1983-1992, Peter Archer, Baron Archer of Sandwell, Labour MP 1966-1992. Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1983-1987.

¹⁷⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, meeting between Paisley, Molyneaux, Kinnock and Archer, 18 Nov. 1986.

¹⁷⁵ The meeting is fleetingly referred to in *The Cork Examiner*, but only in reference to Paisley’s absence at Robinson’s trial for the Clontibret Invasion. *The Irish Times* attempted a more detailed report but were unable to garner any details of the discussion.

¹⁷⁶ *The Cork Examiner*, 29 Nov. 1986.

¹⁷⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/66, meeting between King and FitzGerald, 28 Nov. 1986.

¹⁷⁸ *The Evening Herald*, 18 Dec. 1986.

King said another problem stemmed from the exchange of information between the RUC and the Garda. Although the RUC could request information about suspects after questioning, they were not permitted to be present during interviews. FitzGerald indicated that this was a matter for the Garda but was curious about why King wanted to change the procedure. King said that it did not work as the PIRA were trained to resist interrogation. After they were released most would disappear into the crowd. If trained interrogators could be used, evidence that could be used in court could be obtained. Basically, King wanted more cooperation between the Garda and Irish Army, and the RUC and British Army.¹⁷⁹ King also said that he had heard ‘through the gossip chain’ that the Irish Army and Garda were wary of talking to their British counterparts. When the Garda and Army ‘hear an English accent on the other end of the phone (they) get up-tight because they might be talking to an army officer.’¹⁸⁰ This could not continue. London was willing to provide extra support and training to improve border security.

Thatcher was due to give a speech at the European Council in December. Shortly after beginning, Paisley approached her and presented her with an ‘Ulster Says NO!’ poster. He went on to add, ‘I would like to indict you, Thatcher, as a traitor to the loyalist people of Northern Ireland in denying them the right to vote on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.’¹⁸¹ Thatcher did not react to Paisley’s outburst, indeed she sat ‘chatting and laughing’ until Paisley was ejected from the meeting.¹⁸² King released a statement chastising Paisley for his lack of self-control when it came to publicity stunts. King said Paisley’s actions had served to disgrace the image of Northern Ireland in the influential European arena.¹⁸³ It was an embarrassing interruption for Thatcher in front of her European peers, and she needed to reassert her authority.

Thatcher made a Christmas visit to Northern Ireland for the first time since 1983. She visited the army and police ‘to show her solidarity’ and to chat about the current security

¹⁷⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, meeting between FitzGerald and King, 28 Nov. 1986.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸¹ MTF, speech to European Parliament, 9 Dec. 1986, *The Irish Press*, *The Evening Herald*, 10 Dec. 1986,

¹⁸² *The Cork Examiner*, 10 Nov. 1986.

¹⁸³ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, text of a statement by King, 9 Dec. 1986 and *The News Letter*, 10 Dec. 1986.

situation.¹⁸⁴ Unionists had organised a protest against Thatcher's visit at Belfast City Hall, but the turnout was minimal. Fewer than forty people rallied around Paisley, and people seemed more concerned with finishing their Christmas shopping.¹⁸⁵ Paisley proudly claimed he had called her a 'traitor' and that she had 'scurried as quickly as she could into her helicopter.'¹⁸⁶ It was a hollow victory.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed Anglo-Irish relations in 1986 in greater detail than any previous works of historiography. Now, we understand better how the AIA affected Anglo-Irish relations during its first year. Todd argues that the AIA had a three-fold impact. First, it altered existing policies, second, it formalised Irish influence and third, it changed the aims of nationalists by introducing them to new policies.¹⁸⁷ The AIA also had a social impact. It united the supporters of unionism who were favourable to a more physical campaign, and gave them a cause to oppose in a way that had not been seen since Sunningdale. Although not all jumped onto the anti-AIA bandwagon, a significant number did. The reaction came about due to a sudden disturbance in the *status quo*. 'The AIA did not change the fact of British sovereignty but it did change its meaning in a way that did not suit either unionists' interests or unionists' assumptions about the place of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom.'¹⁸⁸ Unionists protested against the AIA because they saw it as a threat to the Union.¹⁸⁹ Thatcher's turn around, from denouncing the New Ireland Forum report of 1984 to signing an agreement with Dublin within a few months, astounded the unionists. They turned their shock into action, but their mistake lay in their tactics.

They held uninspiring rallies and protests that had been done before and attracted the extreme elements of their support base.¹⁹⁰ Peaceful protests disintegrated into violence against the police, army and businesses. The loyalist mob did more to tarnish Paisley and

¹⁸⁴ BUFVCD, 'Margaret Thatcher's visit to Northern Ireland,' 23 Dec. 1986.

¹⁸⁵ *The Cork Examiner*, 24 Dec. 1986.

¹⁸⁶ BUFVCD, 'Margaret Thatcher's visit to Northern Ireland,' 23 Dec. 1986.

¹⁸⁷ Jennifer Todd, 'Elite Intent, Public Reaction and Institutional Change,' in *The Anglo-Irish Agreement, Rethinking its Legacy*, ed., by Arthur Aughey and Cathy Gormley-Heenan (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 58.

¹⁸⁸ Todd, 'Elite Intent, Public Reaction and Institutional Change,' p. 58.

¹⁸⁹ Cochrane, *Unionist Politics and the Politics of Unionism*, pp. 129-133.

¹⁹⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/98, meeting with Mawhinney, 20 Nov. 1986.

Molyneaux's campaign, and Paisley's actions did little to repair the damage in Westminster. At the end of 1986 Stormont was dissolved, the AIA was still in place and Thatcher was weary of Northern Ireland. Seán Donlon noted that Thatcher expected the AIA to be like 'a magic wand.'¹⁹¹ Unionists would understand that their position in the union had been strengthened. She thought Dublin would step-up to her demands for security co-operation. Therefore, the paramilitaries would finally be defeated. She was disappointed in all three aspects. Unionists were infuriated and set out on a series of strikes and protests. Attacks by republican and loyalist paramilitaries continued. In fact, violence escalated in 1986 as civilians became involved. Although she was frustrated, Thatcher continued to meet with FitzGerald yet each meeting marked a deterioration in Thatcher's interest in Northern Ireland.

Thatcher's relayed her disappointment in the AIA to FitzGerald. Her pessimism was compounded by the fact that some Ulster Unionists were embarking on criminal behaviours to try to fight the agreement. This coupled with Paisley's continual denunciation of her as a traitor led to Thatcher telling FitzGerald that 'We might as well not have had the Agreement.'¹⁹² The AIA did not bring harmony to Northern Ireland, or too Anglo-Irish relations. 1986 also saw extradition between the UK and the Republic of Ireland and shoot to kill emerge as key points of contention that would continue for the rest of Thatcher's term.

Kenneth Bloomfield's anecdote of the AIA being like a house on a precipice is an accurate reflection of the situation between Dublin, Belfast and London at the end of 1986. The Unionists failed to see that London and Dublin would not discard the Agreement. Neither would start to throw the building materials over the edge because 'there would be no house.'¹⁹³ Unionist protests merely irritated the builders in Dublin and London. Until unionists could come up with an alternative blue print, the house was there to stay.

¹⁹¹ Seán Donlon interviewed for 'Thatcher and the IRA: Dealing with terror,' BBC, 2014.

¹⁹² NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/65, FitzGerald meeting with MT, 19 Feb. 1986. London's record of the meeting is kept in TNA UK, PREM 19/1811.

¹⁹³ NAI, TAOIS 2016/52/16, report of meeting, 28 Jan. 1986.

Chapter 7

‘The Bogey-Man’: Haughey and Thatcher, 1987

... she was horrified by what had happened, by the way it disregarded everything that was most precious in British life. And I think ... the iron really entered her soul.¹

Lord Justice Gibson had been on the PIRA's hit list since 1984. He had acquitted RUC officers of killing three PIRA men, Eugene Toman, Gervaise McKerr and Sean Burns, at a checkpoint in Lurgan in 1982. Gibson's commendation of the officers for their 'courage and determination in bringing the three deceased to justice, in this case to the final court of justice,' had incensed nationalists who suspected the security forces were operating under a shoot-to-kill policy. The PIRA carefully planned their revenge attack. Gibson and his wife Cecily were driving back from holiday via Dublin. They had been escorted to the Northern Ireland border by the Garda and had to travel a short distance, through 'no man's land,' alone to meet the RUC. The PIRA had planted a roadside bomb, supplied by Libya, which detonated as the Gibson's passed. They were instantly killed.²

Since the AIA had been signed, violence had increased in Northern Ireland.³ Dublin and London continued to work to find a solution. Unionists continued their protest against the Agreement, starting in January with a petition of concern.⁴ But Unionist outrage at the AIA waned. Ian Paisley and James Molyneaux agreed to meet with Tom King to find a way forward, but focus in London shifted to Dublin as Garret FitzGerald was replaced as Taoiseach by Charles Haughey.⁵

¹ Charles Powell interviewed for 'Endgame in Ireland,' BBC 2001.

² *The Irish Times*, 15 May 1987, *The Evening Herald*, 14 May 1987.

³ The violence did not reach the peak levels it had in the 1970s but there was a steady increase in Troubles related deaths from 1985-1988. Brendan O'Duffy and Brendan O'Leary, 'Violence in Northern Ireland, 1969-June 1989' in *The Future of Northern Ireland*, ed., by John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), appendix 3. See also Marie Therese Fay, Mike Morrissey and Marie Smyth, *The Cost of the Troubles Study* (Londonderry: INCORE, 1997).

⁴ For more on unionist protest against the AIA see Aughey, *Under Siege* and Cochrane, *Unionist Politics*.

⁵ Due to the delayed release of archival documents after 1985, little primary-source based work has been done on Haughey's third-term as Taoiseach. This thesis seeks to redress this gap using newly released files from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of the Taoiseach. Kelly's work on Haughey provides a detailed analysis of Haughey's later years, Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*.

Margaret Thatcher and Haughey had not met since the Falklands fall-out of 1982, and Haughey's anti-AIA speeches had set London on edge.⁶ But when Haughey became Taoiseach, he changed his tune. He agreed to support the AIA but said he would have to prioritise the Republic of Ireland's weak economy. London wanted to maintain a good relationship with Dublin, and investigated how to 'thicken' relations, but events in Northern Ireland overtook them. The Stalker/Sampson report was finished in March, but no arrests were made and its findings remain secret.⁷ The Loughgall ambush in May raised more questions about collusion and shoot-to-kill. Haughey himself had been contacted by the UVF who told him they had been asked by British security forces to assassinate him. International support for the PIRA increased. It was discovered that Colonel Gaddafi had not only said he supported the PIRA, he had supplied them with arms and ammunition. The discovery of the cargo in *The Eksund* alerted Dublin and London to the threat of paramilitary groups. Just over a week later, the Enniskillen Bomb pushed Thatcher over the edge. She was dismayed by the PIRA attack, and was reinforced in her conviction that security needed to be improved. Haughey had side-lined the ECST but, in the aftermath of Enniskillen, passed it through the Dáil with the caveat that all extradition requests had to go through the Irish Attorney General. Thatcher was incensed.

At their final meeting of 1987, Thatcher left Haughey in no doubt about how she felt. To her mind the whole process was in tatters and she was deeply angered that Haughey had not consulted London about the amendment. Haughey tried to reassure her that things had moved in the right direction, but Thatcher had had enough. In her memoirs she concluded that Dublin was more concerned with 'gesture politics' than maintaining good relations with London.⁸

The final chapter of this thesis will continue to highlight how Thatcher disengaged from Northern Ireland. The return of Haughey as Taoiseach meant that Thatcher was no

⁶ See especially Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*.

⁷ Stalkers autobiography is the closest the public has gotten, or likely will get, to discovering what the investigation had found. Stalker, *Stalker Affair*.

⁸ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 407. At the time of writing this chapter, and despite various Freedom of Information requests, the PREM files for 1987 are still withheld by the Cabinet Office until 2019. Therefore, this chapter takes advantage of files released by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Northern Ireland Office (CENT and CJ 4).

longer challenged over her understanding of Northern Ireland. Both parties were advised to focus on their personal relationship rather than their policies due to their troubled past. This coupled with Haughey's new rules around extradition and his flip-flop speeches on the AIA led Thatcher and her team to believe that they could not trust Haughey or his party. This chapter is able to detail meetings between Haughey and Thatcher in 1987 for the first time. Meanwhile, the violence in Northern Ireland continued to escalate. The Enniskillen bomb proved two things to Thatcher; the PIRA were depraved and the Republic of Ireland continued to be a PIRA haven. By the end of the year, Thatcher admitted to Haughey that while London would continue to try to work with Dublin, but she felt 'deeply angered.' This chapter highlights Thatcher's sense of frustration which was only further jarred by the violence in Northern Ireland and the return of Haughey.

The Unionist Protest Continues, January 1987

Paisley and Molyneaux picked up where they left off before the Christmas break. On 2 January 1987, the DUP and UUP launched a petition against the AIA. The aim was to recreate the Ulster Covenant of 1912. The petition was taken door-to-door, to Church Halls and public buildings for members of the public to sign. But after a few days it became obvious to the FCO that the petition had failed to capture the imagination of the anti-AIA unionists,

... the reality was that most of the prominent Unionists present signed a copy of the petition twice, once for the benefit of the cameras and once for the record, and one report suggests that copies available for signature were actually in short supply. Despite an attempt at solemnity, the local press commented that the occasion was scarcely enhanced by Lord Mayor Sammy Wilson and his mock Italian suit, which contrasted significantly with the more sombre dress of his colleagues.⁹

On 17 January high-profile unionist MPs, including Ian Paisley, took part in a drive for signatures. Stations were set up for one day in Orange Halls, Leisure Centres, and even a horse box in Belfast. But the public were not interested. January 1987 was particularly cold and potential signatories decided to stay inside rather than venture out. The NIO also found that people avoided stations. '...shoppers in Bangor "passed by on the other side" to avoid a

⁹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political development in Northern Ireland, 8 Jan. 1987.

stand manned by Jim Kilfedder (MP for North Down) and Hazel Bradford (a prominent member of the UUP whose husband had been Minister for Development in the Parliament of Northern Ireland until 1972) in the main street ...'¹⁰ The petition was not a complete disaster, it was delivered to Buckingham Palace with 400,000 signatures. But it did highlight the split between the UUP and DUP.

The UUP had been uncomfortable with some of the DUP's more extreme tactics. The 12-point civil protest plan of 1986 had aimed to officiate the anti-AIA protest but the DUP had already deviated from it. In the middle of January 1987, Peter Robinson was fined £15,000 for his part in the Clontibret invasion, a reminder of the incitement to violence the DUP, and Paisley's own deputy, were capable of. Paisley and Molyneaux met on 12 January and agreed a new set of measures. What these measures were remains elusive. They announced that they would 'increase the pressure on local government' but did not outline how that would happen.¹¹ On 19 January the DUP and UUP held separate meetings and announced conflicting strategies. The DUP wanted to continue to interrupt the work of local Councils and carry out mass resignations. The UUP wanted to carry out two council meetings; one in February to set rates; the second in June to elect new Chairmen and Mayors. This fundamental difference in approach 'confounded' the FCO.¹² It was clear that 'Those who predicted ... that 1987 was likely to follow the pattern of 1986 seem to have got it about right.'¹³ Although the UUP/DUP split was apparent, the FCO doubted that either party would try to conduct talks with anyone but each other.¹⁴

In spite of the FCO's report, Tom King invited Paisley and Molyneaux to meet him to discuss progress in Northern Ireland. King wanted to try to get things moving so that 1987 was not as 'sterile politically' as 1986, but Paisley and Molyneaux refused.¹⁵ Brian Mawhinney advised King to work on an offer for Paisley and Molyneaux. Then if they ever approached Belfast and/or King, they would have something to present to them. Mawhinney

¹⁰ TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political development in Northern Ireland, 22 Jan. 1987.

¹¹ PRONI, CENT 1/18/48, note for the record, Jan. 1987.

¹² TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political development in Northern Ireland, 22 Jan. 1987 and *The Irish Examiner*, 20 Jan. 1987.

¹³ TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political development in Northern Ireland, 8 Jan. 1987.

¹⁴ TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political development in Northern Ireland, 22 Jan. 1987.

¹⁵ *The News Letter*, 14 Jan. 1987.

also felt that King should continue to encourage the unionists to the table. He hoped they would eventually acknowledge that the AIA ‘... is not going to go away...’¹⁶ But the mood in London was also bleak.

Richard Ryan met with Ian Gow to talk about the unionists. Ryan reported that Gow was ‘... very depressed.’ Paisley and Molyneaux refused to budge, and there was little evidence that any new blood was moving up through the ranks. Gow added “They are all awful”. He had little hope for a change in Northern Ireland after the general elections in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. He felt the situation was stagnant.¹⁷ There was about to be a change in Dublin.

‘We have worked together before and we can work together again’: The Return of Haughey

FitzGerald was in trouble. He had survived two no confidence votes in 1986 but the state of the economy coupled with the failure of the divorce referendum meant that FitzGerald’s days in the Taoiseach’s Office were numbered.¹⁸ FitzGerald reshuffled his Cabinet in 1986, but the change lacked ‘motive and purpose.’¹⁹ When key Ministers, most notably Barry Desmond who was then Minister for Health, refused to move in the reshuffle, FitzGerald’s authority over his party was called into question.²⁰ Haughey started to circle Fine Gael. He told Nicholas Fenn, the British Ambassador, that he would be back in power soon.²¹ Haughey was confident he would win an election due to FitzGerald’s ‘bad record.’ Fenn reported that Haughey had ‘some harsh things to say about the (AIA),’ but that the potential new Taoiseach did not want to spark a crisis with London. He recognised the improvements the AIA had made to Anglo-Irish relations, but he also felt that good relations with the UK were ‘not everything.’ Haughey warned that London ‘should not expect an authentic Irish Nationalist to accept a copper-bottomed partition.’²² Haughey also told the FCO that he would probably

¹⁶ PRONI, CENT 3/68/A, note from Mawhinney to King, 15 Jan. 1987.

¹⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/61, lunch with Gow, 13 Jan. 1987.

¹⁸ TNA UK, PREM 19/1811, Goodison 102 to FCO, 17 Feb. 1986, ‘Confidence in Government: Motion,’ Dáil Éireann Debate vol. 363, no. 15, 20 Feb. 1986 and FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 619-639.

¹⁹ Arnold, *Haughey*, p. 228.

²⁰ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, pp. 619-620.

²¹ Sir Nicholas Fenn, British diplomat. Ambassador to Ireland 1986-1991.

²² TNA UK, CJ 4/6891, Fenn 14 to FCO, 14 Jan. 1987.

continue to operate the AIA but he would oversee Anglo-Irish relations with a 'harder' nationalist stance. Haughey wanted Britain to withdraw from Northern Ireland and would not be shy about telling them this in future.²³ FitzGerald's government ended on 20 January after the Labour Party withdrew its support over Fine Gael's budget proposals.²⁴ An election was announced for February.

The NIO passed Fianna Fáil's election manifesto to the FCO along with an evaluation. As Taoiseach, Haughey would press for a constitutional conference as he had in December 1980. Haughey would also fight for '... substantial reforms in the administration of justice etc.'²⁵ The NIO prepared a brief on a potential Fianna Fáil government. It was expected that Haughey would personally take charge of Anglo-Irish relations as he had in previous terms. That way, he could shape his Northern Ireland policy according to the '... political dividends it pays at home.' The NIO warned that there would be 'rough water' if Haughey became Taoiseach again. He had 'unusually strong nationalist convictions' and would '... try to exploit all the available diplomatic weapons available to him in the UK, Europe or the USA to induce faster progress than he wishes in Northern Ireland.' It would be pivotal for London to publicly commit to the AIA again. Haughey had lambasted the AIA at a Wolfe Tone commemoration in Bodinstown in October 1986.²⁶ He had told the crowd that Northern Ireland remained a 'failed political entity' and that Fianna Fáil would continue to push for Irish unity in spite of Article one.²⁷ Haughey felt that the trouble with the AIA was that it secured the unionist position, and they had proved to be a problem themselves. Haughey was worried that the AIA created '... a situation where the Irish Government will be backed into a position where they will have to accept responsibility for an undesirable, an unsatisfactory and an unpalatable security apparatus and its operations without having any real control over them.'²⁸ If relations broke down, London planned to either ask the US to pressurise Haughey into continuing Anglo-Irish relations or use the AIIGC as a bargaining

²³ PRONI, CENT 3/83/A, doing business with Haughey, 16 Jan. 1987.

²⁴ FitzGerald outlines these proposals in *All in a Life*, pp. 640-642.

²⁵ TNA UK, CJ 4/6891, Fenn 47 to FCO, 30 Jan. 1987.

²⁶ Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985 between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/aiadoc.htm>.

²⁷ Mansergh, *Spirit of the Nation*, pp. 1159-1160. Article One of the AIA secured Northern Ireland's union with the UK as long as the majority wanted it.

²⁸ NAI, DFA 2017/4/62, Fianna Fáil and the AIA, the dual approach, 24 Feb. 1987.

chip by offering to give it a wider role.²⁹ Haughey won the 1987 election and returned to the Taoiseach's office on 10 March.

Having suffered yet another defeat at the polls, FitzGerald resigned as leader of Fine Gael and announced his retirement from politics. It was the end of an era for Anglo-Irish relations. FitzGerald wrote that he said goodbye to Thatcher at the February EEC London summit and that she '... was not receptive to my attempts to convince her that (Haughey) would not perform a u-turn on the (AIA).'³⁰ Thatcher expected Haughey to play to Republican sympathies when he took over from FitzGerald.³¹ FitzGerald was replaced as leader of Fine Gael by Alan Dukes, who the NIO felt was '... tough, unflappable, clear-headed, self-confident, decisive and an excellent debater ...'³² They sensed he would be a '... very effective antagonist for Mr. Haughey.'³³ Along with a change in leader came other changes.

Noel Dorr moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was replaced as Ambassador to the UK by Andrew O'Rourke.³⁴ One London personality report characterised O'Rourke as 'quiet ... intelligent, thoughtful and objective ...' an improvement on the unpopular Dorr.³⁵ Peter Barry was replaced as Minister for Foreign Affairs by the tactless Brian Lenihan, who had caused problems after the Throne Room Summit by telling the media there would be a united Ireland within ten years (see chapter one). David Goodall, whom Thatcher had threatened to move in 1984 (see chapter four) was replaced as Deputy Under Secretary of State for Defence by John Boyd.³⁶ Ryan felt that Boyd was 'very direct and personable, and has a clear enthusiasm for his Irish responsibilities.'³⁷ Robert Armstrong, Séan Donlon,

²⁹ PRONI, CENT 3/83A, handling of Haughey on Northern Ireland- Tactics, covering letter plus document, 4 Feb. 1987.

³⁰ FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, p. 602.

³¹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 405.

³² Alan Dukes, Fine Gael TD 1981-2002. Minister for Justice 1986-1987, Leader of Fine Gael 1987-1990.

³³ TNA UK, CJ 4/6891, Stimson 126 to FCO, 23 Mar. 1987.

³⁴ Andrew O'Rourke, Irish diplomat. Irish Ambassador to the UK 1987-1991.

³⁵ TNA UK, FCO 87/2176, personality report, undated. In sharp contrast Dorr had been called 'boring, long-winded and irritating ... a prig who manages to give the infuriating impression that he is in sole and permanent possession of the high moral ground' (TNA UK, PREM 19/1070). The London personality report was kinder, 'Widely read and very intelligent, he is a very skilful draftsman ... a very serious, teetotal, hard-working public servant ...' TNA UK, FCO 87/2176.

³⁶ See chpt. 5 for MT's threat to move Goodall to a 'good embassy.' John Boyd, British diplomat. Deputy Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Defence and Intelligence) 1987-1989, Deputy Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Chief Clerk 1989-1992.

³⁷ British Diplomatic Oral History Programme (BDOHP), interview with John Boyd, 1999 and NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/55, lunch with John Boyd, Deputy Under-Secretary of State, FCO, 16 Mar. 1987.

Michael Lillis, Dermot Nally and Dick Spring remained on the Anglo-Irish scene. London sent Fenn to greet the new Taoiseach.

Haughey said that he looked forward to ‘resuming a constructive relationship’ with Thatcher. On that note, Fenn said that London had noted his change of stance since last October. Haughey had since said ‘... “no problem”: “wherever we may go in the future we start with the (AIA) as it was signed”.’³⁸ Haughey told *The Irish Times* that Anglo-Irish meetings were well established and he did ‘... not see any reason to depart from that practice.’³⁹ It seemed that both Dublin and London were ready for business as usual.⁴⁰

During his first speech to the Dáil as Taoiseach on 10 March, Haughey briefly attacked the ‘constitutional aspects’ of the AIA. Fianna Fáil would continue to support the agreement but Haughey said that they had serious reservations about Article one.⁴¹ King and Thatcher met to discuss the speech on 12 March. They agreed that Haughey’s comments were ‘unhelpful’ and felt it was important to discourage ‘any further utterances on these lines and persuading the new Irish Government to endorse the (AIA) in its entirety.’ Cabinet suspected that Haughey’s administration would not last.⁴² There was little London could do.

In Dublin, Haughey was briefed on the mood in London. He had not met Thatcher since March 1982 after their Falklands fall out (see chapter 3). Would his charm work on the Prime Minister? Officials from the DFA and Department of the Taoiseach doubted it. Thatcher continued to focus on security and had told Dorr that she felt that Dublin was ‘unable or perhaps unwilling to commit sufficient resources’ to patrolling the border. Thatcher’s disappointment had increased, as had violence in Northern Ireland, after the AIA. London needed ‘... results of a concrete nature ...’⁴³ Boyd outlined to Ryan London’s attitude towards the AIA,

³⁸ TNA UK, CJ 4/6891, Fenn 90 to FCO, 4 Mar. 1987.

³⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/55, *The Irish Times*, 7 Mar. 1987.

⁴⁰ TNA UK, CJ 4/6891, Fenn 90 to FCO, 4 Mar. 1987.

⁴¹ ‘Appointment of Taoiseach and Nomination of Members of Government,’ Dáil Éireann debate, 10 Mar. 1987.

⁴² TNA UK, CAB 128/85/9, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at No. 10, 12 Mar. 1987.

⁴³ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, security statistics; cross border security co-operation, 13 Mar. 1987 and NAI, DFA 2017/4/178, cross border security cooperation, 13 Mar. 1987.

- they genuinely expect full (and pretty vigorous) implementation from the Irish Government;
- they are ready for business as usual;
- they hope that Tom King's invitation to Minister Lenihan to have a meal in London will enable an early meeting;
- they expect officials to get on with the business of the Conference with a view to a meeting of it perhaps in April;
- they envisage a meeting between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister in the first instance *en marge* of the (EEC) toward the end of the Belgian presidency in June.⁴⁴

Boyd concluded that Dublin's work with back-bench MPs was important. It kept them up-to-date with Dublin and the scale of the Northern Ireland problem. '(Boyd) said he personally felt this to be a necessary and important part of the whole process although he personally would rather sup with the devil than some of the "Roy Bean-type" figures on the right wing of the Conservative Party!'⁴⁵ After becoming Taoiseach, Haughey needed to consider how he would approach Anglo-Irish relations.

By the end of March, Haughey had changed his tune again. Haughey told the Dáil that his government would '... honour and operate ...' the AIA.⁴⁶ King reflected that this change of heart was probably due to pressure excised on Haughey during the annual St. Patrick's Day trip to Washington.⁴⁷ Peter Barry later told the FCO that Haughey had been "rapped over the knuckles" in the US over his attitude towards the AIA.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the apparent change was welcome. Haughey also indicated that he would consider hosting an informal meeting about a new committee on constitutional reform. If the parties of the Dáil agreed that the Irish constitution needed to be revised, Haughey would support the idea. Although Fianna Fáil had no proposals to change the constitution, the fact that Haughey was open to suggestions from outside the party looked promising. '... his own openness to the idea of inter-party talks opens the way for the subject of Constitutional reform becoming a

⁴⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/55, lunch with John Boyd, Deputy Under-Secretary of State, FCO, 16 Mar. 1987.

⁴⁵ *iBid.*,

⁴⁶ 'Ceisteanna- Questions. Oral answers - AIA,' Dáil Éireann debate, 24 Mar. 1987.

⁴⁷ TNA UK, CAB 128/85/12, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at No. 10, 26 Mar. 1987.

⁴⁸ TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political development in Northern Ireland, 5 Apr. 1987.

major feature of the twenty-fifth Dáil.’⁴⁹ But how sincere was Haughey about the AIA? Officials from the NIO were sent to discuss Haughey’s plans.

Lillis had bad news for the NIO. Haughey was still ‘... strongly antipathetic ...’ to the AIA, but felt obliged by internal and external pressures to accept it.⁵⁰ The FCO hoped that ‘bogey-man’ Haughey would continue to operate according to that pressure but there was no guarantee.⁵¹ Lillis hoped that London would agree to a ‘real and inter-linked progress on the main areas defined by the Agreement. The objective in doing so would be to “clear the pitch” for a really serious bid for devolution.’⁵² Dorr warned London that they should expect Haughey to push for progress on the justice system and discrimination in the workplace in Northern Ireland. Indeed, Declan O’Donovan, an Assistant Secretary in the DFA, was sent to meet with John Steel, then Director of the Northern Ireland Court Service, to discuss the legal system in Northern Ireland. In the summer of 1986, Steel had told the DFA that three-judge-courts would not happen. He had hinted that a ‘... second senior judicial office ...’ was a better proposal and now, in April 1987, he was ‘... convinced that such an office has become a distinct probability.’ Steel’s idea was deemed important because he had talked them over with Robert Lowry, the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.⁵³

Eamon O Tuathail, Assistant Secretary at Dublin’s DFA, stressed the importance of London staying focused. They could be distracted by the marching season and the General Election. Nationalists had seen some improvements since the AIA was signed and support for Sinn Féin was in decline. But there had also been an increase in PIRA activity.⁵⁴ *The Independent* reported back in March that the PIRA had regrouped in some areas and was working on increasing its arsenal.⁵⁵ Robert Andrew, Permanent Under-Secretary at the NIO, said that the security forces had defused a lot of bombs. They had also noticed a revival of

⁴⁹ *The Irish Times*, 25 Mar. 1987 and TNA UK, FCO 87/2391, letter from Dickinson to Baker, 26 Mar. 1987.

⁵⁰ PRONI, CENT 3/83A, future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, 6 Apr. 1987.

⁵¹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political development in Northern Ireland, 5 Apr. 1987.

⁵² PRONI, CENT 3/83A, future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, 6 Apr. 1987.

⁵³ NAI, DFA 2017/20/19, conversation with the Director of the Northern Ireland court service, 7 Apr. 1987. Robert Lowry, Baron Lowry, Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland 1971-1988.

⁵⁴ NAI, DFA 2017/20/19, informal meeting between Joint Chairmen, 6 Apr. 1987. A copy of this meeting is also kept in TAOIS 2017/10/33.

⁵⁵ *The Evening Herald*, 31 Mar. 1987.

car bombs and shootings. Andrew warned that a ‘bad explosion ... could create a very difficult atmosphere.’⁵⁶

On 2 April, Lawrence Marley, a PIRA volunteer, was shot dead at his home in Belfast. His funeral, held four days later, proved to be a propaganda coup for the PIRA. Marley’s funeral had to be stopped, and was eventually abandoned, after the RUC stormed the procession in full riot gear. The behaviour of the RUC was criticised in Dublin. Bishop Cathal Daly called on the security forces to ‘... formulate and publicly announce the conditions which they expected mourners to observe ...’ so funerals could be respectfully carried out.⁵⁷ A report by the Department of the Taoiseach in May reflected on the impact of the RUC’s ‘insensitive behaviour.’ Although some PIRA funerals had been orchestrated to trap the security forces, Dublin felt that the RUC should have known they were walking into a trap, particularly as television cameras were present.⁵⁸ The report concluded, ‘We have pressed for a more discreet presence which does not offend mourners and disarms Provo propagandists.’⁵⁹ At the April AIIGC meeting, Gerry Collins asked John Hermon if the RUC had ‘... won at the Marley funeral.’ Hermon replied, ‘We won one-third and we lost two-thirds.’⁶⁰

Danny Morrison, a PIRA volunteer who had acted as a spokesman during the 1981 Hunger Strike, told an unnamed Dublin contact that the PIRA were ‘very pleased with the controversy which had developed over the police handling of paramilitary funerals and intended to “keep the pot boiling”.’ Morrison also said that although the PIRA had taken “a lot of flak” for the deaths of two RUC Constables on 11 April, for the most part the nationalist community felt that the RUC “had it coming to them”. Funerals would be used as a propaganda tool by Sinn Féin to increase support. Back in February, the DFA in Dublin had received promising information on the PIRA.

⁵⁶ NAI, DFA 2017/20/19, informal meeting between Joint Chairmen, 6 Apr. 1987. The issue of PIRA ammunition was later raised by the Cabinet in London. TNA UK, CAB 128/86/1, conclusions Cabinet meeting, 23 Apr. 1987

⁵⁷ *The Irish Examiner* and *The Irish Press*, 10 Apr. 1987,

⁵⁸ A news report on the funeral is on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O7MceRg2j4>.

⁵⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/33, security and legal issues, May 1987.

⁶⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/33, AIIGC, 22 Apr. 1987.

Patrick J. McGrory, a Belfast criminal Lawyer, told David Donoghue, an official from the DFA, that Gerry Adams had indicated that it was time for Sinn Féin to distance itself from the “armed struggle”. McGrory felt that Adams had become disenchanted with violence and wanted to present himself as a “politician more than a gunman”. Adams was also ‘furious’ with the INLA. They had ‘damaged the “good name” of Republicanism’ and the PIRA would step in to ‘put an end to it’ if they did not end their campaign. McGrory also passed on that republicans were waiting for unionists to “go berserk” over the AIA. They expected a civil war to break out, but recruitment to the PIRA had declined.⁶¹ McGrory’s information was important. He indicated that republicans were more likely to accept an invitation to talk. Adams wanted to carve a career as a politician.⁶² Another unnamed contact for the Department of the Taoiseach said that funerals had proved to be a ‘godsend’ for Adams and Sinn Féin. The ‘emotive issue’ would swing undecided nationalist voters to Sinn Féin in the same way as the 1981 hunger strike had.⁶³ Support for the PIRA was also increasing overseas.

Back in March, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, leader of Libya, had caused an uproar after he congratulated Haughey on his re-election and called him a ‘friend.’ Gaddafi had made similar comments back in 1985 while Haughey was leader of the opposition.⁶⁴ A newspaper cut out, kept for reference by the DFA in Dublin, reported on the criticism from Belfast and London. Frank Millar, UUP General Secretary, called for Thatcher to reconsider the ‘... whole shape and scale, structure and purpose of Anglo-Irish relations.’⁶⁵ At the April AIIGC meeting, Hermon was asked where weapons for the PIRA were coming from. Hermon listed Canada, America, Amsterdam and the Hague, and mentioned an arms cache found in Sligo that was from Libya.⁶⁶ Support was clearly widespread. The deaths of Lord and Lady

⁶¹ NAI, DFA 2017/20/17, meeting with P.J. McGrory, Belfast, 16 Feb. 1987. Bishop Cathal Daly also told the DFA about Adam’s new tactic. See NAI, DFA 2017/20/18, meeting with Bishop Cathal Daly, 31 Mar. 1987.

⁶² The final chapter of Stephen Kelly’s book provides compelling evidence that Adams asked to meet with Haughey. According to Kelly, Haughey refused, but continued to talk to Father Alec Reid who was a close contact of Adams. Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, pp. 325-334.

⁶³ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/59, Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries, 10 Apr. 1987.

⁶⁴ *Irish News* and *The Irish Press*, 3 Mar. 1987 and Dwyer, Charlie, p. 223.

⁶⁵ NAI, DFA 2017/4/62, *Irish News*, 3 Mar. 1987.

⁶⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/33, AIIGC, 22 Apr. 1987.

Gibson at the end of April served as proof of a surge in paramilitary activity.⁶⁷ Events in May further proved this theory.

‘Hidden eyes were watching everywhere,’ Summer 1987

At the May 1987 meeting of the AIIGC, Dublin said that they hoped the PIRA would ‘opt for a relatively low profile over the coming months.’⁶⁸ Obviously news of the Loughgall ambush had not yet reached the meeting. On the evening of 8 May, an eight-man PIRA unit had stolen a digger, planted a bomb in its front bucket, and drove into the village of Loughgall to blow up the RUC station. The men were also armed with automatic rifles and some were wearing bullet proof vests. After driving the digger through the perimeter fence of the station, the bomb was detonated. The station was badly damaged but before the PIRA men could continue with their attack, the SAS ambushed the group. All eight PIRA men, and a civilian, died at the scene. It was the biggest loss of life in one incident the PIRA would suffer throughout The Troubles. It was obvious that the SAS had prior knowledge of the attack.⁶⁹

Dublin and London were wary of saying much about the Loughgall ambush. In a letter to Haughey, Lenihan wrote that people were suspicious, ‘Many people, including the Leader of our Opposition, were asking why could not some or all of the gunmen have been arrested or even shot in the legs?’ The ambush was an operational success but it had ‘touched a nerve.’ Lenihan asked King why the SAS had decided to shoot the men instead of trying to arrest them. King said he had been told that the SAS deemed arrest too dangerous, and shot the men to prevent further casualties.⁷⁰ The PIRA had lost support in the months following the AIA, but the actions of the security forces and RUC was playing into their hands.⁷¹ The FCO feared there could be ‘a wave of emotional reaction’ which would benefit Sinn Féin.⁷² Further to this, the PIRA had started to target high profile British civil servants in a letter

⁶⁷ TNA UK, CAB 128/86/2, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at No. 10, 30 Apr. 1987.

⁶⁸ NAI, DFA 2017/4/54, cross-border incidents; fifth meeting of the AIIGC, London, 9 May 1986.

⁶⁹ Ellison and Smyth, *Crowned Harp*, p. 122. For more on how British Security Forces fought with the PIRA, please see Raymond Murray, *The SAS in Ireland* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1990), Mark Urban, *Big Boys’ Rules: The SAS and the Secret Struggle Against the IRA* (London: Faber, 1993). For the PIRA’s perspective see Tommy McKearney, *The Provisional IRA: From Insurrection to Parliament* (London: Pluto, 2011).

⁷⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, Lenihan report, letter and related business, undated (circa. mid May 1987).

⁷¹ NAI, DFA 2017/4/54, fifth meeting of the AIIGC, London, 9 May 1986.

⁷² TNA UK, FCO 87/2514, political developments in Northern Ireland, 15 May 1987.

bomb campaign. Bernard Ingham and Robert Andrew were amongst those targeted.⁷³ But, in spite of the evidence of international support for the PIRA, the Department of the Taoiseach felt that the current upsurge of violence came from a desire to prove that the organisation had not ‘gone “stale”’.⁷⁴ There remained the question of how these attacks affect relations between Haughey and Thatcher?

Thatcher and Haughey planned to meet while they were both in Brussels for the June EEC. Haughey had been Taoiseach for under three months, and the DFA in Dublin had found out, from Fenn, that Thatcher wanted to get off on the right foot with him. Fenn added that Thatcher had been briefed on security co-operation, the possibility of dialogue between the parties in Northern Ireland and devolution. Fenn advised Haughey to focus on his relationship with Thatcher, and to avoid mentioning anything too heavy i.e. his all-party conference idea. The DFA also warned Haughey that Thatcher was not impressed with the SDLP’s reaction to the AIA, and that he would probably have to reassure her that the party was willing to support the talks process.⁷⁵ Lillis suggested that Haughey’s critique of the AIA could be useful. Haughey could raise London’s “non delivery” to Thatcher should she become defensive about security.⁷⁶ Dorr advised Haughey that Thatcher was still prone to ‘seize on and pursue some issue where she feels she is in the right, in a single minded - not to say self-righteous way.’ She felt that she had gotten little from the AIA and tended to lecture Dublin, in an “exasperating” way, on her grievances. Haughey would have to choose between arguing with Thatcher or ‘showing a measure of patience which could perhaps be of longer term benefit.’⁷⁷ Overall, Thatcher wanted her first meeting with Haughey to ‘...go well and be the basis for continued friendly relations.’⁷⁸

⁷³ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/33, security and legal issues, May 1987, *The Evening Herald* and *The Irish Examiner*, 16 Apr. 1987 and *The Irish Press*, 21 Apr. 1987.

⁷⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/33, security and legal issues, May 1987. It emerged in June that a small group in the Italian Secret Service had sent arms to the PIRA, *The Irish Press* and *The Evening Herald*, 3 June 1987. Israel’s Ambassador to the UK, Yehuda Avner, told Dorr that Paisley had asked him for weapons, NAI, DFA 2017/4/78, letter from Dorr to Lillis, 14 June 1987.

⁷⁵ NAI, DFA 2017/4/149, Haughey meeting with MT, general steering note, undated (circa. June 1987).

⁷⁶ NAI, DFA 2017/4/149, letter from Lillis to O Tuathail, 16 June 1987.

⁷⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, memo from Dorr, 23 June 1987 and NAI, DFA 2017/4/149, developments ahead on Northern Ireland - Haughey meeting with MT, 23 June 1987.

⁷⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, Haughey meeting with MT, 26 June 1987.

In turn, Thatcher was sent a brief on Haughey. The FCO warned that Haughey was ‘Republican by conviction’ but that he had committed verbally to the AIA.⁷⁹ The NIO knew there was no ‘...disguising Mr. Haughey’s past bad record’ but there needed to be a meeting between the two leaders. Haughey was a ‘one-man band’ and rebuilding relations between him and Thatcher was crucial. Haughey expected a meeting with the Prime Minister, and the NIO knew he would be offended if this did not happen.⁸⁰ Haughey wanted ‘to mend fences.’ Robert Andrew advised that ‘harping on past disagreements’ would be pointless.⁸¹ Haughey would approach a meeting with Thatcher with ‘relative cordiality, and common interest.’ Without Haughey, London could lose any hope of the SDLP backing the AIA. ‘Equally, unhelpfulness in Dublin will harden, rather than help unfreeze Unionist attitudes.’⁸² There was a window of opportunity for the SDLP. In the June general election, the SDLP had done better than Sinn Féin. But this could result in a surge in violence from the PIRA as they saw a decline in support at the ballot box.⁸³ Overall, Haughey would be ‘on his best behaviour ... He genuinely wants to re-establish a cordial working relationship with ... His “Dear Margaret” if she won the upcoming UK General Election.’⁸⁴

The 1987 British General Election resulted in another victory for Thatcher and the Conservatives, and gave the Prime Minister the opportunity to undertake a reshuffle. In mid-June, there were a few key changes to the Anglo team. Nicholas Scott, who had proved to be a useful contact for Lillis, returned to London and became Minister of State for Social Security. Lillis felt Scott’s departure was ‘... bad news ...’ as he was ‘... sympathetic to constitutional nationalism ... He was also vital in King’s first year in office in calming (King) down and in keeping him committed to implementing “our side” of the Agreement.’ Lillis said that King barely knew the new Minister of State, John Stanley, and had to fly to London to meet him.⁸⁵ Lillis also tipped O Tuathail off on the other characters of the NIO.

⁷⁹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, UK/Ireland relations, June 1987.

⁸⁰ TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, Fenn to FCO, 12 June 1987.

⁸¹ TNA UK, CAB 128/86/9, letter from Andrew to Armstrong, 17 June 1987.

⁸² TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, draft minute from King to MT, undated and TNA UK, CAB 128/86/9, draft letter from Andrew to Armstrong, undated (June).

⁸³ TNA UK, CJ 4/6880, Northern Ireland: The extreme Republican vote, June 1987.

⁸⁴ TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, Fenn 237 to FCO, 26 June 1987.

⁸⁵ Sir John Stanley, Conservative MP 1974-2015. Minister of State NIO 1987-1988, Defence and Minister for the Armed Forces 1983-1987.

Lillis felt that Scott's departure could lighten up Richard Needham, the newly appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.⁸⁶ The two men had become rivals, resulting in Needham taking up the unionist cause. Needham could be got on side if his current interest, the redevelopment of Belfast, was taken seriously. Lillis said that Brian Mawhinney had held on to some informal unionist contacts. Mawhinney had also come round to the AIA, so he could be a useful contact for Dublin. Lillis welcomed King's reappointment as Secretary of State, noting that he had come a long way and had become '... his own man *vis-à-vis* the Stormont machine, the police and the Army.'⁸⁷ Now that the UK Election was over, and Thatcher was to remain Prime Minister, attention in Dublin turned back to the EEC summit.

The Department of the Taoiseach and DFA prepared briefs on security co-operation for Haughey throughout June. The RUC had described the information they got from the Garda as "low grade" due to their inexperience of covert surveillance. The Stalker/Sampson report, which had been completed in March, had further damaged nationalist confidence in the RUC. No criminal proceedings were brought against the RUC and the contents of the report remained secret. The public were given no answers about shoot-to-kill. The Garda were therefore wary of adopting any RUC structures until the affair was 'cleared up.'⁸⁸ The Stalker/Sampson affair had the potential to reduce 'Anglo-Irish relations to their lowest point since the signing of the (AIA).'⁸⁹ Contrary to this, one NIO brief reported that relations between the Garda and the RUC had actually improved. 'Better communications, and a system of regular and formalised as well as personal contact has established a framework for progress.' But there were improvements to be made on resources and training.⁹⁰ The Taoiseach's Office also highlighted problems with Haughey's public statements.

Haughey's flip-flop speeches on the AIA had caused concern in London, and Lillis had picked up on some 'worrying vibes' in Maryfield. His contacts had reported that

⁸⁶ Sir Richard Needham, 6th Earl of Kilmorey, Conservative MP 1979-1997. Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1983-1984, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1985-1992.

⁸⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, letter from Lillis to O Tuathail, 16 June 1987.

⁸⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, cross-border security co-operation, 18 June 1987.

⁸⁹ Cunningham, *British Government Policy in Northern Ireland*, p. 60.

⁹⁰ TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, security brief from Innes to Burns, 22 June 1987.

disparities between public statements and actual performance made the situation ‘quite difficult to handle.’ If he discussed actual policy it clashed with some of Haughey’s statements and Lillis was then open to accusations of ‘either insufficient awareness of the position on our own side, or even of a degree of “going native”.’ Lillis and his team were then subjected to ‘resentment’ from their counterparts. Lillis had also been fighting Dublin’s corner. He had told London ‘literally every day’ that security could not be treated as an isolated problem. If the AIA was to succeed, London needed to recognise issues the minority community faced.⁹¹ The DFA expanded on this with a brief prepared the day after Lillis’s letter.

There had been ‘no delivery insofar as the Nationalist population of Northern Ireland was concerned.’ London had only paid ‘lip service’ to the confidence building measures in public administration and justice. The Stalker/Sampson affair had resulted in a lack of trust in the Northern Ireland justice system. Further to this, the Code of Conduct for the RUC had not yet been implemented. Dorr said he had raised these issues with Mark Elliott, an official from the NIO, so that work could start behind the scenes and Haughey would not need to issue a list of demands to Thatcher at their meeting.⁹²

On 30 June, Haughey and Thatcher had a ‘friendly’ twenty-minute meeting.⁹³ The discussion started with a brief chat about the state of the Irish economy, which Haughey indicated would be his main concern for the time being.⁹⁴ He said the Republic of Ireland was ‘right up against the wall.’⁹⁵ Haughey went on to congratulate Thatcher on the AIA, ‘She was the first British Prime Minister to tell the Unionists that there must be change and progress and to stand firm on this ... they would come round. This was an historic contribution to Anglo-Irish relations.’⁹⁶ He continued, ‘You did not, like Prime Minister Wilson, for example, back down; it is very important that they understand the position.’⁹⁷

⁹¹ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, letter from Lillis to Matthews, 18 June 1987.

⁹² NAI, DFA 2017/4/149, meeting with MT, 19 June 1987. The same brief is in NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56.

⁹³ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 30 June 1987. London’s record of this meeting is in CJ 4/6776.

⁹⁴ TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, MT meeting with Haughey, 30 June 1987.

⁹⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 30 June 1987.

⁹⁶ TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, MT meeting with Haughey, 30 June 1987.

⁹⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 30 June 1987.

Haughey remembered that a little flattery could get you far with Thatcher. Thatcher then turned to security. She continued to be concerned by the number of PIRA attacks and the use of the border as an escape route. Haughey assured her that, once the economy had stabilised, Dublin would focus on incidents from their side of the border. He jokingly asked her for the lend of ‘£2 billion or so ...!’ In the meantime, Thatcher felt that Dublin and London could agree to ‘a fuller exchange of information and above all pre-emptive intelligence was vital.’⁹⁸ But Haughey counteracted that co-operation had improved. At the close of the meeting, Haughey suggested that they could meet again when the economy was under control, ‘we could perhaps talk through our respective aides as to whether there are ways in which we can make progress and also placate the unionists.’⁹⁹ Although the meeting had gone well, Arnold argued that Dublin and London’s post-summit press conferences ‘produced a chilly definition of how things were between the two leaders.’ Thatcher ‘publicly revealed the state of the relationship in a rhetorical question to (Ingham): ‘What does it say in the *communiqué*?’ she asked. ‘I think we worked it up to cordial, didn’t we Bernard?’ Meanwhile Haughey ‘was quite clearly seen to be in the hands of his shrewd, able and by now quite experienced press secretary, P.J. Mara ...’ Haughey’s performance pointed to ‘passive leadership.’ Haughey was going to play it safe with London.¹⁰⁰

August is usually a quiet month for Belfast, Dublin and London, as officials and Ministers take their holidays. But August 1987 in Dublin proved to be quite dramatic. The Department of the Taoiseach received a letter from the UVF informing them that MI5, MI6 and the SAS had passed on information about the PIRA, including suspects and planned attacks. The letter claimed that the aforementioned security forces had also supplied the UVF with weapons before asking them to assassinate Haughey. Addressing Haughey directly, the letter claimed that an MI5 Officer supplied information on,

Your cars, aerial photographs of your home, your island home on the Kerry coast.
Details of your trips into Farranford Private Airport, photographs of your plane.

⁹⁸ TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, MT meeting with Haughey, 30 June 1987.

⁹⁹ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 30 June 1987.

¹⁰⁰ Arnold, *Haughey*, p. 239.

Photographs and the details of your private yacht [*sic*]. We refused to do it, we were asked would we accept responsibility if you were killed we refused.¹⁰¹

Haughey was on holiday when the letter arrived, but was shown it later. He asked for the Department of Justice to let him know if they had any more information.¹⁰² What did the UVF hope to achieve by sending the letter?

If the letter was genuine, it was a threat in itself. The UVF claimed to know Haughey's whereabouts during his leisure time. They were armed and could assassinate him at any time. However, Ed Moloney, a seasoned Northern Ireland journalist and commentator, doubts that the letter is genuine.¹⁰³ But the fact that the letter was kept and stored in a Department of the Taoiseach file means that the threat was taken seriously. With paramilitary violence on the rise in 1987, no doubt somebody wanted to capitalise on the threat and try to scare the Taoiseach.

Autumn 1987

Following the summer break, the NIO published a 'game plan' for Anglo-Irish relations over the next few months. Dublin was still preoccupied with the economy, and believed that London's commitment to the AIA was 'lukewarm.' Meanwhile, London looked on Irish problems as 'an irritant which risks deflecting attention from their wider economic and social policies.' The report also warned that Anglo-Irish relations were susceptible to damage from unpredictable events. Therefore, the NIO decided it would continue with their idea to have 'talks about talks' with the UUP and DUP to allow Dublin time to sort out its economy and, hopefully, to bring something positive to London.¹⁰⁴

On 14 September, Molyneux and Paisley met with King for 'talks about talks.' This was the first meeting between an official from Westminster and the unionist alliance since

¹⁰¹ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, letter from Capt. W. Johnston to Haughey, 5 Aug. 1987.

¹⁰² NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, memo from Department of the Taoiseach to the Department of Justice, undated (circa late Aug. 1987).

¹⁰³ According to his blog he asked a UVF contact about the Haughey letter. The source labelled the letter 'nonsense' and 'something republicans might like to have been true.' Ed Moloney, 'That UVF Letter- Here It Is,' *The Broken Elbow*, 4 Jan. 2018, <https://thebrokenelbow.com/2018/01/04/that-uvf-letter-to-haughey-here-it-is/>.

¹⁰⁴ PRONI, CENT 3/83A, Anglo-Irish Relations - Game Plan, Sept. 1987.

February 1986.¹⁰⁵ By meeting with King, Paisley and Molyneaux signified the end of the unionist alliance's boycott of ministers and officials from London. King told Thatcher that the first meeting had been '... reasonably cordial, though Paisley has more than once become a little heated and shown signs of wishing to break off the process.' But Paisley and Molyneaux did agree to stop demanding the Maryfield Secretariat to close.¹⁰⁶ They also agreed that a round table conference involving all the main Northern Ireland parties, bar Sinn Féin, should be established for three months. The aim of the conference would be to discuss proposals on devolution, but the two leaders would not elaborate any further on their position. Paisley and Molyneaux also agreed that Dublin should be informed about the conference, although they would not be invited to attend. Haughey had suggested that he and Thatcher could meet to discuss the unionists so this idea would look good to Dublin.¹⁰⁷ King felt they should make these arrangements as soon as possible and Thatcher agreed. She noted on the brief 'certainly we can't wait long.'¹⁰⁸ But she then changed her mind.

On further reflection, Thatcher had '... serious and substantial reservations ...' about King's memo. She decided that Dublin should not be told about the new idea and listed her reservations as follows,

- the proposal is tantamount to suspending the (AIA) for three months. This would look publicly as though we were giving the Unionists what they want. She believes that it would be disastrous to give in to the conditions sought by Paisley and Molyneaux and anyway the Government has no authority to do so ...
- she does not accept that Paisley and Molyneaux have failed to realise how much the role of the Intergovernmental Conference would be reduced in the event of devolution. It has been explained to them countless times, including by her.¹⁰⁹

And, quite drastically, she asked that any copies of King's minute of the meeting be recalled.¹¹⁰ In a draft letter to King, Thatcher further explained her reservations with the plan.

¹⁰⁵ King had requested the meeting back in July. TNA UK, CAB 128/86/9, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at No. 10, 9 July 1987.

¹⁰⁶ Maryfield was the name given to the permanent office of the AIIGC in Belfast.

¹⁰⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 30 June 1987 and TNA UK, CJ 4/6776, MT meeting with Haughey, 30 June 1987.

¹⁰⁸ TNA UK, FCO 87/2519, minute from King to MT, 18 Sept. 1987.

¹⁰⁹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2519, letter from Powell to Watkins, 21 Sept. 1987.

¹¹⁰ *i*Bid.,

Thatcher did not want to appear to buckle under pressure from the unionists and suspend the AIA. The Agreement was a blueprint for good Anglo-Irish relations and also put ‘... Northern Ireland politics in perspective ...’ The AIA also worked as an expression of good faith between Dublin and London that other countries could recognise. Suspending Maryfield and the AIIGC would not go ahead.¹¹¹ The fact that there was no announcement led *The Sunday Independent* to report that King-Paisley-Molyneaux meeting had resulted in a stalemate.¹¹² But Thatcher did say that she wanted King to continue meeting with the unionists, ‘Despite this gloomy analysis, we are committed to looking for ways forward. Accordingly, I support Mr. King’s efforts. The thrust of what he now proposes seems right.’ Thatcher also wanted Dublin to eventually be told about the discussions, but not right away. Thatcher requested a meeting to further discuss political development in Northern Ireland.¹¹³ King, meanwhile, continued to work with Dublin.

King met with Lenihan over breakfast at the EEC Foreign Minister’s weekend at the start of October. Lenihan wanted to discuss the ECST. At the end of September, FitzGerald had caused a stir at the British-Irish Association Conference. He had made an impassioned speech that explained ‘a very specific linkage between reform of the North’s single judge courts and his Government’s willingness to ratify the (ECST).’ FitzGerald’s speech was reported in the Irish media.¹¹⁴ Lenihan said that FitzGerald’s comments had ‘wrong-footed’ Haughey’s Government. He warned that the ECST would probably not pass through the Dáil. Therefore, Dublin would need at least six-months to work on the bill. King replied that a delay would look bad and would give ‘... entirely the wrong political signal,’ but Lenihan did not give ground.¹¹⁵ The ECST would become the dominant Anglo-Irish issue in the last months of 1987.

¹¹¹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2519, draft minute, undated. The minute is drafted from King to MT, but as it is in the FCO file this is probably a typo.

¹¹² *The Evening Herald*, 20 Sept. 1987.

¹¹³ TNA UK, FCO 87/2519, draft minute, undated. The minute is drafted from King to MT, but as it is in the FCO file this is probably a typo. When the memo was completed it would be sent to King, Robert Armstrong and the Lord President of the Council Willie Whitelaw. The meeting had to be postponed from the original date, 5 Oct, as MT was at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. The meeting was rescheduled to 9 November, so King could not meet with Paisley and Thatcher in the middle of October as planned.

¹¹⁴ *The Evening Herald*, 27 and 28 Sept. 1987, *The Irish Examiner*, 28 Sept. 1987.

¹¹⁵ FOI 0231-17, King meeting with Lenihan, 4 Oct. 1987.

‘Innocent until proved Irish’: Anglo-Irish Relations and the ECST

The Armstrong-Nally teams came together at the start of October for an informal chat about the impact of the AIA.¹¹⁶ Dublin also wanted to tackle London about the ECST, which they could not implement until there was a change in the Northern Ireland Courts. Armstrong felt that, despite the difficulties, the AIA was ‘robust’,

I don’t think things will ever be the same again. Both sides in Northern Ireland have seen the willingness of the British government, led by as right wing a Prime Minister as they are ever likely to see, prepared nevertheless to enter into an Agreement with the Irish Government. In the long term that is very significant.¹¹⁷

Armstrong also assured Nally and Dorr that Thatcher’s commitment to the AIA was ‘... as solid as ever.’¹¹⁸ Nally and Dorr then brought up the courts issue.

Nally said that Haughey was actually ‘... somewhat dubious about the desirability of mixed courts,’ but people like FitzGerald, Barry and Geraldine Kennedy, who had been elected Progressive Democrat TD in the 1987 election, were drawing attention to it. They each felt that there had not been enough change in the Northern Ireland Justice System. Such criticism from high-profile people had kept the Irish media interested in the Courts issue.¹¹⁹ Andrew asked if jury trials were immediately reintroduced would it solve the problem? And if there were prosecutions in the Stalker/Sampson affair would it make a difference? Dorr replied that those measures would help, ‘But it was not possible for us to draw up an exact balance sheet.’ Nally and Dorr concluded the meeting by stating again that the ECST bill would be deferred until London made changes to Northern Ireland Courts.¹²⁰ ‘The problems in ratifying the ECST were political rather than legal.’ Dublin had always thought that they

¹¹⁶ The meeting consisted of Robert Armstrong, Robert Andrew and an unnamed note taker from London, and Dermot Nally and Noel Dorr from Dublin.

¹¹⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, meeting in Cabinet Office London, 6 Oct. 1987 and NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, Armstrong meeting, 7 Oct. 1987.

¹¹⁸ *iBid.*,

¹¹⁹ FitzGerald had approached Robert Andrew at a British-Irish Association Conference in September to ask about mixed courts. See TNA UK, FCO 87/2505. Barry was interviewed about mixed courts in *The Irish Press*, 6 Aug. 1987 while Kennedy’s views were published by *The Irish Times*, 17 Sept. 1987.

¹²⁰ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, meeting in Cabinet Office London, 6 Oct. 1987 and NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, Armstrong meeting, 7 Oct. 1987.

would only have to consent to the ECST when London changed the Northern Ireland Court System. When this misunderstanding came to light, Dublin decided they would rather delay the act and risk the Anglo-Irish process than be seen to bow to pressure from Thatcher.¹²¹ Haughey and Armstrong met at the end of October to go over the ECST.

Armstrong opened the meeting with a confirmation that Thatcher appreciated ‘... as well as anybody the significance of parliamentary arithmetic and she knows the sort of difficulties you face.’ Later in the day he said that Thatcher was ‘not for turning’ on the AIA.¹²² But Armstrong warned that it would be a “considerable setback” if the ECST was not ratified on 1 December. But Haughey did not budge. He said he needed 12 months to get the ECST through the Dáil. Haughey had had a difficult time in government, ‘I am asking our backbenchers to close hospitals and take extremely difficult decisions, often contrary to what they themselves have said in their constituencies.’ Haughey asked London to appreciate the difficulties he faced, ‘Let us as partners in this Agreement agree to defer action to give both of us time over the next 12 months.’¹²³ London asked for a deadline of 6 months but Dublin did not want to agree to a short time limit. As they saw it the situation was ‘evolving.’¹²⁴ Nothing was agreed at this stage, and events in Northern Ireland overtook Anglo-Irish relations once again.

‘There is no such thing as 100% security’: The End of 1987

On 1 November, an Irish fishing vessel called *The Eksund* was intercepted by French authorities. It was found to have 150 tonnes of arms and ammunition from Libya. *The Eksund* was taking the cargo to the PIRA. This was not the first shipment, but its size and the fact that the French found it led to a lot of press coverage. Collins told the Dáil that the Garda were investigating reports of arms shipments from Libya back in 1985 and 1986.¹²⁵ Collins later told RTÉ that he believed there was “reason to worry” about the amount of support the PIRA had received from Libya.¹²⁶ The same day, Glasgow police confiscated a PIRA arms

¹²¹ O’Kane, *Britain and Ireland*, p. 82.

¹²² NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, Northern Ireland, 3 Nov. 1987.

¹²³ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, meeting between Haughey and Armstrong, 30 Oct. 1987.

¹²⁴ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, Northern Ireland, 3 Nov. 1987.

¹²⁵ ‘Ceisteanna- Questions. Oral Answers- Illegal Importation of Arms,’ Dáil Éireann, 10 Nov. 1987.

¹²⁶ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, Libya and the PIRA, 16 Nov. 1987.

cache in a canal that included ten submachine guns and revolvers.¹²⁷ Violence had been on the rise throughout 1987 and *The Eksund* find confirmed that the PIRA were not going to back down. Wary that these incidents could affect Anglo-Irish relations, the FCO in London investigated how to “thicken” Anglo-Irish relations.

The report, compiled by the Republic of Ireland Department, researched possible topics of conversation to have with Dublin apart from Northern Ireland.¹²⁸ The report felt that it was important to take notice of Haughey, ‘What is needed however is some indication that we do not want to deal with him at arms length. Can we find nice things to say to him personally on the economy - i.e. anything except Northern Ireland?’ Unofficial (or personal) relations were pivotal to a good relationship with Dublin. When blips occurred, ‘atavistic feelings’ arose as had happened in December 1980. The report stated that it would ‘take another 600 years to breed those out of the system. But gradual thickening up of official relations of one sort or another will undoubtedly help.’¹²⁹ Two days after the report was published, one of the worst incidents of The Troubles occurred.

8 November 1987 was Remembrance Sunday. The PIRA targeted two Remembrance ceremonies at Enniskillen and Tullyhommon. The larger bomb at Tullyhommon did not explode, but 11 people were killed in the Enniskillen bomb. The attack sent shockwaves through Dublin and London. Haughey immediately wrote to Thatcher to send his sympathies and support, ‘All the security forces in this island must combine in an all out effort to have the perpetrators brought to justice.’ Thatcher noted that it was a ‘good message.’¹³⁰ Thatcher was horrified by the attack. She told the BBC,

It was so appalling, really I could scarcely believe it because every civilised country honours and respects their dead. And every civilised country expects others to honour their dead too. And to take advantage of those people, assembling in that way, was really a desecration. It was so cruel, so callous that the people who did it can have

¹²⁷ *The Irish Press*, 1 Nov. 1986.

¹²⁸ TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, memo from George to Boyd, 6 Nov. 1987.

¹²⁹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, minute from T.J.B. George to Boyd, 6 Nov. 1987.

¹³⁰ TNA UK, CJ 4/6872, note from Norgrove to MT, 8 Nov. 1987 and quotes: Enniskillen bombing, 8 Nov. 1987.

nothing of human thoughtfulness or kindness or sensitivity at all. It was utterly barbaric.¹³¹

Thatcher continued that no country should have sympathy for those who carried out the attack, and there should be no hiding place for the people behind it. She also said that, no matter how much effort was put into it, there could never be 100% security.¹³² Enniskillen further highlighted the holes in Anglo-Irish security cooperation. The town was targeted because it was close to the border. The bombers could detonate or plant a bomb and evade capture by crossing the border into the Republic of Ireland in as little as twenty minutes. But Enniskillen proved to be a propaganda disaster for the PIRA.

The evening after the bomb, Gordon Wilson publicly forgave the bombers for killing his daughter Marie, a student nurse.¹³³ His television interview ‘made a deep impression on a worldwide audience.’¹³⁴ Even Gaddafi condemned the attack, stating that the bomb did not ‘belong to the legitimate revolutionary operation.’¹³⁵ The PIRA said that the bomb had been aimed at security personnel and tried to blame interference from British Army equipment for setting the bomb off early, but the excuse did not wash.¹³⁶ In fact it emerged that the Tullyhommon service was targeted because the Girls and Boy’s Brigade were parading there. The PIRA had targeted a Christian organisation made up of members as young as three years old.¹³⁷ It later emerged that a 1200lb bomb was found and diffused in Belfast on 8 November. The PIRA had carried out a carefully planned attack on Remembrance Day with the aim of inflicting large-scale civilian casualties. It was speculated that the PIRA wanted to goad loyalists into violence, and drive a wedge between Dublin and London.¹³⁸

Thatcher met with a Northern Ireland delegation the day after Enniskillen. Mr. Foster wanted London to take greater measures against Sinn Féin, ‘The Government must protect

¹³¹ BUFVCD, ‘Margaret Thatcher on the Enniskillen Massacre,’ 9 Nov. 1987.

¹³² *Ibid.*,

¹³³ BUFVCD, ‘Father of Enniskillen massacre victim,’ 9 Nov. 1987.

¹³⁴ TNA UK, CAB 128/87/8, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at No. 10, 12 Nov. 1987.

¹³⁵ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, Northern Ireland: security statistics; Libyan news agency, Jana, Nov. 1987.

¹³⁶ *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1987.

¹³⁷ *The Irish Examiner*, 11 Nov. 1987, *The Evening Herald*, 12 Nov. 1987.

¹³⁸ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/34, Northern Ireland security situation, 5-11 Nov. 1987, TNA UK, FCO 87/2572, Ferguson 1219 to FCO, 30 Nov. 1987 and *The Evening Herald*, 9 Nov. 1987.

the Unionist people of Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin should be proscribed and selective internment brought back.’ Thatcher said that London would not be seen to panic and rush through new measures ‘in the heat of the moment.’ Mr. Cooper suggested that London could persuade Dublin to ‘divorce themselves completely from Sinn Féin and support the security forces. There should be no longer any ambivalence about this.’ He thought that London should act quickly, and this was actually discussed by Cabinet a few days later.¹³⁹ Thatcher also insisted on attending the rescheduled memorial service.¹⁴⁰ She wrote in her memoirs that after Enniskillen, ‘... requirements for practical improvements in security, reviewed after each new tragedy, increasingly dominated my policy towards both Northern Ireland and the Republic.’¹⁴¹

Enniskillen deeply impacted Thatcher. London wanted to continue working with Dublin and in the weeks after Enniskillen, they tried to figure out the best course to keep the relationship between the two premiers healthy. ‘The crucial relationship is that between the two Prime Ministers - chequered in the past and uneasy now.’ Thatcher and Haughey were due to meet at the Copenhagen EEC on 4 December. Fenn thought it would be better to delay an Anglo-Irish summit instead of having a “tense” meeting too soon. Fenn also thought that figuring out a way to help the Irish economy would earn “golden options” from Haughey.¹⁴² Indeed, Haughey was in trouble.

When he met with King on 18 November, Haughey still could not guarantee that the ECST would be passed through the Dáil. Haughey asked Armstrong to appreciate that he had taken on a lot when he came into office in March. He had had to change his position on the AIA and had tried to work it. But he needed 12 months to pass the ECST. Haughey asked that London not ‘... look a gift horse in the mouth.’ It was unfortunate that there would be a delay but London would eventually get all that it had asked for,

¹³⁹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2571, MT meeting with Northern Ireland delegation, 9 Nov. 1987. Cabinet discussed offering extra training and support to the Garda, TNA UK, CAB 128/87/8, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street on 12 Nov. 1987. Fenn also felt London should use the Enniskillen incident to put pressure on Dublin, TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, submission from Fenn to George, 23 Nov. 1987.

¹⁴⁰ TNA UK, FCO 87/2517, political development in Northern Ireland, 7 Dec. 1987.

¹⁴¹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 406.

¹⁴² TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, letter from Fenn to George, 16 Nov. 1987.

You will have extradition: you will have the backing of warrants system: your courts will not be able to interfere any more than they would have been able to interfere under the informal arrangements. You are worried about them. Our courts are perhaps worse! And we are making this proposal to try and get ourselves out of these difficulties.

King offered help in the way of three options,

- (1) made the offer, which I understand has not yet been formally accepted, under which there would be an exchange of letters accepting the declaratory statement idea;
- (2) we would also formally accept the speciality rule under which a person cannot be separately tried for a non-extraditable offence;
- (3) we would also pursue the question of the check list so as to make sure that warrants are properly prepared.

But Haughey did not accept King's offer,

We are in deep trouble politically. Our Party headquarters say that things there are going berserk. I would like you to understand that this means for us an enormous political battle. We are offering everything you need and want. This is what I thought a few weeks ago I could not give you. What we are offering does not take from the efficacy of the backing of warrants system.¹⁴³

King continued to press for the ECST at a meeting with Lenihan at the Foreign Affairs Council on 23 November.

King emphasised that ratifying the ECST on time was pivotal to good relations with London. Lenihan '...warmly welcomed the close cross-border cooperation over follow-up to *The Eksund*.' Lenihan actually approached King again later to say again that Dublin was '...extremely grateful for the cooperation they had received from us over the search for arms from previous shipments.' But Dublin still would not be able to pass the ECST in 6 months. They needed 12. King 'regarded what Mr. Lenihan had to say as very bad news' but on

¹⁴³ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/72, meeting between Haughey and King, 18 Nov. 1987.

returning to London, it was discovered that ‘... Lenihan’s line had been overtaken by events.’¹⁴⁴

On 23 November, the evening before Lenihan and King met at the EEC, there had been a meeting in Dublin and the decision was made to ratify the ECST. An amendment bill was published the same day. The new amendment meant that extradition applications would be made to the Irish Attorney General. He or she would ensure there was a case to answer, based on *prima facie* evidence, before allowing the extradition to go ahead.¹⁴⁵ Haughey announced to the Dáil that the revised ECST would come into law on 30 November.¹⁴⁶ Thatcher was incensed by the amendment. She told her Cabinet,

The system was therefore likely to go wrong before long ... The result of the changes would be that arrangements in the Irish Republic for extradition to the United Kingdom would be worse than before, and worse in some ways than the Republic’s arrangements for extradition to other European countries ... The Prime Minister, summing up a short discussion, said that the position of the Irish Government was most unsatisfactory. The Government’s public line would have to be critical.¹⁴⁷

On 1 December, days before she was due to meet Haughey, she told the Commons, ‘... what the Republic is doing by taking this step is making us the least favoured nation in this matter.’¹⁴⁸ The FCO tried to push their “thickening” relations message again.

‘As the dust settles on ECST ratification and extradition, we need to think if there is anything we can do to thicken Anglo-Irish relations.’ The FCO advised that London should,

- a. (Widen) the angle of vision, and avoiding an obsessive concentration on Northern Ireland;
- b. personalities;
- c. Northern Ireland affairs.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ FOI 0231-17, Foreign Affairs Council, 23-24 November: contacts with Lenihan, 24 Nov. 1987.

¹⁴⁵ *The Evening Herald* and *The Irish Press*, 24 Nov. 1987.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Extradition (Amendment) Bill, 1987: Second Stage,’ Dáil Éireann debate, 27 Nov. 1987.

¹⁴⁷ TNA UK, CAB 128/87/10, conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at No. 10, 26 Nov. 1987.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Engagements,’ Commons sitting of 1 Dec. 1987, Hansard HC [745-912] cc. 745-912.

¹⁴⁹ TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, submission from George to Boyd, circa. 4 Dec. 1987.

They also felt that the Thatcher-Haughey dynamic would be best served by having ‘occasional contacts to gradually warm the relationship between the two.’¹⁵⁰ But Thatcher could not hide her irritation with Haughey when she met him at the EEC in Copenhagen.

She opened the meeting by telling Haughey off,

I am extremely upset by your moves on extradition. They are a step backwards. We have been working a system for 20 years or more and here now I find that it is changed without consultation. My Attorney, Paddy Mayhew, tells me that there is no way his documentation can be kept out of the Irish courts. He says that previous cases have been thrown out by the Irish courts for all sorts of frivolous reasons. One case was thrown out because documents were not stapled together. I can see a time when our Attorney General would be called before an Irish court to answer it. I am very angry about all this. My feelings go deeper than anger. He tells me there may never be another extradition case again. I know now from what you told me that you have extreme difficulties with your people, but where are they living? They are going back to the black and tans - or is it 400 years ago? ... I did not have to sign the (AIA). I could have got by without it. The only thing it has brought me is criticism and bad blood with the Unionists. I had thought that if we operated it for a time, we could calm their fears: that has not come about. The Nationalists are quite glad about it. I (thought) we could build on all that. Then we get this! I appreciate your problems. I know the level of crime you have in Dublin. I know your Gardaí have difficulties. There is a level of Provo support which can provide safe houses in many areas. What is going to happen now is that we will not get extradition and your courts can look through Paddy's warrants.¹⁵¹

Haughey waited until Thatcher drew breath and said, ‘I am sorry you feel so strongly. I can see you feel anger ...’ Thatcher replied, ‘It is not anger. It is far deeper than that. The whole thing has suddenly collapsed ...’ Haughey tried to defend the amendment. He argued that the new law would prevent mistakes and the release of suspects into the community. But Thatcher would not hear it. ‘There is no way you can court-proof what you are doing.’ She told him outright, ‘You are not backing our warrants.’ Haughey argued that the new amendment was ‘framed negatively ... In the vast majority cases will have to be looked at in

¹⁵⁰ TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, submission from George to Boyd, circa. 4 Dec. 1987.

¹⁵¹ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 4-5 December 1987. Underline in original document.

more detail but they will be few.’ Thatcher replied, ‘Why do I even try!’ Haughey implored her, ‘Keep trying. You are one of the most able politicians. In the Council you want binding and effective budgetary discipline. Apply the same thing here.’ He asked her to give the new amendment time, ‘Don’t say we did this unilaterally or broke faith. Give the new system an opportunity and we will see that it does work properly.’ She replied, ‘We will try it: we have no option.’¹⁵²

The NIO produced a report on the next steps for Anglo-Irish relations. They surmised that Enniskillen had had a positive impact on Dublin. They wanted to do more to improve security, but they would do it in their own way. Lawrence Wren retired and was replaced as Garda Commissioner by Eamonn Doherty. The personal animosity between Wren and John Hermon would no longer be an obstacle to co-operation between the Garda and the RUC.¹⁵³ A new security initiative would be implemented in 1988. A border zone, controlled by the RUC and the Army, would be introduced and the number of battalions to patrol the border would be increased. A Border Commander would be appointed and he would coordinate cross-border operations with the Garda.¹⁵⁴ King advised the FCO that close cooperation with Dublin should try to be maintained. ‘... closer contacts of this kind could provide a cushion for the tumbles which periodically bedevil Anglo/Irish relations. But he considers that we will need to pace ourselves quite gently through all this ...’¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

The ‘cold wave’ of January 1987 is perhaps an apt representation of the general state of Anglo-Irish relations throughout that year. The year started off with yet more protests from the DUP and UUP. A petition of concern against the AIA was delivered to Buckingham Palace with 400,000 signatures. But unionists failed to realise that the AIA would not be undone. Dublin and London were committed to the mechanisms of the Agreement, foremost in communicating with each other. Paisley and Molyneaux must have realised this as they agreed to meet with King. Their idea for a party conference with London was hardly ground

¹⁵² NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 4-5 December 1987. Underline in original document.

¹⁵³ TNA UK, CJ 4/6877, combatting terrorism in Northern Ireland, 18 Dec. 1987.

¹⁵⁴ TNA UK, CJ 4/6877, draft agreement, steps to improve the security situation in Northern Ireland, 18 Dec. 1987.

¹⁵⁵ TNA UK, FCO 87/2435, letter from Parker to George, 30 Dec. 1987.

breaking, but it was a start. Events in Northern Ireland and Ireland overshadowed the unionists.

It began with the return of Haughey as Taoiseach. Haughey had previously spelt out his opposition to the AIA, but on becoming Taoiseach decided to support the Agreement. Haughey did not want to ‘spark another crisis with London,’ memories of Thatcher’s last hand-bagging in 1980 must have still been vivid. Dublin set out to get along with London in spite of Haughey’s private doubts over the AIA and ever increasing paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. The Stalker/Sampson report, completed in March, failed to allay nationalist mistrust in the Northern Ireland Justice system and the security services. The Loughgall ambush confirmed to many critics that there was a shoot-to-kill policy in force in Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, the PIRA received a propaganda boost from the funeral of Marley, which was handled disastrously by the RUC. The group also had the support of a variety of countries, but most notably Libya. Gaddafi had openly said he supported the armed struggle against Britain and the discovery of *The Eksund* confirmed that the mad dog of the Middle East had sent the PIRA an extensive cargo of arms and ammunition.

As violence increased, contact between Dublin and London continued steadily. Thatcher and Haughey had a friendly meeting at the EEC in June where Haughey said he was more concerned by the Irish economy than Northern Ireland. London was anxious to get the ECST passed but Dublin was slow on the up-take. London ramped the pressure up after the summer break but Dublin refused to budge. They were adamant that they needed twelve months to get the bill passed through the Dáil. If they tried any earlier, Haughey would risk leaving the Taoiseach’s office again. That all changed following the Enniskillen Bomb. The fact that Gaddafi condemned the attack is indicative of the level of shock and revulsion the PIRA’s plan warranted. Dublin continued to tell London that they could not rush through the ECST, but Haughey suddenly announced a new amendment to the act that confirmed to Thatcher that he would conduct gesture politics throughout his term.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 407.

Haughey wanted to gain control over British extradition requests. He did not want to be accused of being Thatcher's puppet. So his extradition act included the caveat that any requests had to go through the Irish Attorney General first. Thatcher was furious. When she met Haughey in December, Dublin's record of the meeting shows she bombarded Haughey with a rant that left him with little room for manoeuvre. He tried to flatter her, telling her she was the only Prime Minister capable of dealing with the complicated Northern Ireland issue effectively. But Thatcher had reached her limit. Haughey asked her to give the amended ECST a try. Her reply, 'We will try it: we have no option' reflects her overall weariness with Dublin and Northern Ireland at the end of 1987.¹⁵⁷

This chapter has highlighted how a change of leader can affect Anglo-Irish relations. For the first time, we can fully understand how the return of Haughey in 1987 impacted Anglo-Irish relations. The two leaders had last fallen out back in 1982. Five years later, Thatcher still felt wary of Haughey. Haughey's contradicting speeches on the AIA coupled with his decision to try to control British extradition requests proved to Thatcher that there was little point in engaging with Haughey. During their last meeting in 1987, she told him she had 'no option.' This is a far cry from the Iron Lady the media and general public believe Thatcher to be. She was truly disappointed that the AIA had not solved the Northern Ireland problem. Indeed, if anything, Enniskillen seemed to prove that it had made the situation worse. Thatcher admitted that she had little idea of what to do next and instead turned her attention to the wider world. This theme continues up and until she left the Prime Minister's office, as the Epilogue will show.

¹⁵⁷ NAI, TAOIS 2017/10/56, meeting between Haughey and MT, 4-5 December 1987.

Epilogue

“No selfish strategic interest”: Anglo-Irish relations, 1988-1990

Following Margaret Thatcher and Charles Haughey’s December 1987 meeting, Anglo-Irish relations became stagnant. According to her memoirs, Enniskillen confirmed two things to Thatcher; that ‘terrorism would have to be met with more and more effective counter-terrorist activity’; and that the best way forward was to ‘stand almost alone’ when it came to Northern Ireland.¹ We can see from the available records that before she left No. 10 in November 1990 Thatcher did not meet with Haughey in the margins of an Anglo-Irish summit again.² The two premiers continued to meet during EEC summits, but in 1990 Haughey asked that he and Thatcher no longer treat Northern Ireland as a key issue.³ Haughey and Thatcher both turned their attention to the wider political stage.

After her incredibly successful Moscow visit in 1987 Thatcher became an internationally recognised world leader.⁴ She had spoken about the need to help the people of Eastern Europe who lived under communism.⁵ Now, with the help of Ronald Reagan, she was in a position to make a move. Haughey meanwhile, wanted to remain as Taoiseach for as long as possible. The Irish economy proved to be a greater priority in the late 1980’s and Ireland’s presidency of the Council of the European Union (CEU) gave Haughey the opportunity to parade as President on the international stage.⁶ Then, just before Thatcher resigned as leader, Peter Brooke, who had replaced Tom King as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in 1989, made the Whitbread speech in which the British Government confirmed it had ‘no selfish strategic interest in Northern Ireland: our role is to help, enable

¹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 407.

² CAIN, ‘A Chronology of the Conflict,’ 1988 <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch88.htm>, 1989 <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch89.htm>, 1990 <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch90.htm>. For an analysis of the Thatcher Government and Northern Ireland from 1988-1990 see Spencer (eds.), *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, chpts. 1 and 5 and Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, pp. 406-415.

³ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, minute from Butler to Powell, 19 Apr. 1990.

⁴ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, pp. 614-634 and 670-672, Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, pp. 478-485.

⁵ Charles Moore interviewed for ‘Charles Moore: Margaret Thatcher and the Cold War,’ Institute of Economic Affairs, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMvJaXDQMsg>.

⁶ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, Fenn 331 to Kerr, 17 Apr. 1990. See also Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, pp. 334-340 and Whelan, *Fianna Fáil*, pp. 229-250 for an assessment of Haughey’s priorities between 1988 and 1990.

and encourage.’⁷ 13 days later, Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister and withdrew from front-line politics.

As the majority of files from Belfast, Dublin and London for the years 1988-1990 are still withheld, this epilogue takes advantage of secondary and published primary sources to describe how Thatcher’s focus on Northern Ireland began to wane in the final years of her premiership.⁸ Her involvement with Northern Ireland affairs decreased as she turned her attention to world affairs, most notably the Cold War. Thatcher was no longer interested in maintaining a relationship with Dublin, and *vice versa*. Haughey wanted to elevate Ireland’s position onto the global stage and secure his position as Taoiseach. Thatcher’s Government had ‘no selfish strategic interest’ in Northern Ireland.⁹

‘Appalling savagery’: 1988

March 1988 saw two weeks of escalated paramilitary activity from both sides of the divide. It started with the deaths of three PIRA volunteers, Seán Savage, Daniel McCann and Mairéad Farrell, in Gibraltar. The three suspects were shot dead by plain-clothed SAS soldiers. It was suspected that the three had planned to attack the changing of the guard ceremony outside the residence of the Governor of Gibraltar with a bomb. It later emerged that Savage, McCann and Farrell were unarmed when they were shot, and no car bomb was found. This all sounded alarmingly similar to the incidents investigated by the Stalker/Sampson inquiry (see chapter seven). The television documentary, *Death on the Rock*, further scandalised the incident.¹⁰ The bodies of Savage, McCann and Farrell were flown home to Belfast.

A large crowd had gathered for the joint funeral service and burial at Milltown Cemetery. As the third coffin was lowered into the ground, Michael Stone, a member of the

⁷ Dixon and O’Kane, *Northern Ireland*, pp. 142-143 for the entire speech.

⁸ The majority of the PREM files covering 1988-1990 are withheld under the Freedom of Information Act for security reasons. They are due to be reconsidered in 2019. The only file that was available for consultation for this epilogue was PREM 19/3403. PREM 19/2274 was released 20 days before the submission deadline of this thesis. Therefore, articles from *The Irish Times* covering the release are referred to in place of the file itself.

⁹ The ‘Whitbread speech’ is printed in full in Dixon and O’Kane, *Northern Ireland Since 1969*, pp. 142-143.

¹⁰ ‘Death on the Rock’ is available to watch on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7MBqTw2vl0>. For more on the Gibraltar killings see especially, Nicholas Eckert, *Fatal Encounter: The Story of the Gibraltar Killings* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1999).

loyalist paramilitary UDA, threw a grenade towards the crowd. Stone hoped to kill Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness but failed. He continued to throw grenades and fired as he ran towards the M1 motorway. He killed three people and injured at least sixty others before he was apprehended by members of the crowd, badly beaten and arrested by the RUC.¹¹

The funeral of Caoimhín Mac Brádaigh, one of Stone's victims, took place three days later. As the funeral procession travelled towards Milltown Cemetery, a silver Volkswagen Passat drove towards the funeral. The car was trapped by the funeral procession who believed they were under attack by loyalists. Two plain-clothed soldiers, Corporals Derek Wood and David Howes, were in the car. As the crowd surged, Wood fired his handgun, briefly scattering the crowd. The corporals were eventually overpowered. All of this happened in full view of the media who recorded the Corporals being dragged from their car.¹² They were beaten before being taken to a waste ground where they were further beaten, stripped, searched, stabbed and shot.¹³ Thatcher was outraged by the murder of the corporals. She told the BBC it was an act of 'appalling savagery.'¹⁴ In her memoirs, Thatcher wrote, 'No one who saw the film of the lynching of the two young soldiers trapped by that frenzied Republican mob ... will believe that reason or goodwill can ever be a substitute for force when dealing with Irish Republican terrorism.'¹⁵ In light of these events, Haughey requested a meeting with Nicholas Fenn.

Communications between Dublin and London had decreased to the extent that there was no contact from London after any of the incidents in March. Haughey asked Fenn if Thatcher was 'trying to destabilise his administration. We'd come from the relative harmony of Enniskillen to full crisis in the space of a few weeks in Dublin; and London hadn't noticed.'¹⁶ Fenn later recalled that he had tried to keep London updated, but that 'if British Ambassadors in Dublin want to be heard, they need to shout, because the British government

¹¹ McKittrick, *Lost Lives*, pp. 1117-1124. Footage of Stone's attack is on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCfjifKmk2U>. For more on the Milltown Cemetery Killings, see especially Martin Dillon, *Stone Cold: The True Story of Michael Stone and the Milltown Massacre* (London: Hutchinson, 1992).

¹² This footage is also on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhfgQOLSrTQ>.

¹³ McKittrick, *Lost Lives*, pp. 1120-1124.

¹⁴ MTF, Margaret Thatcher remarks on IRA lynching of Corporals Wood and Howes, 19 Mar. 1988,

¹⁵ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 407.

¹⁶ BDOHP, interview with Nicholas Fenn, 2010.

is always too busy fighting a war in the Balkans or wherever it may be.’ Fenn tried to grab Thatcher’s attention with a brief entitled “Litany of Horror”. In it he advised that contact should be maintained in accordance with the AIA. Fenn was then called to London by Thatcher who, by this time ‘regarded Haughey with utter contempt.’ She was furious with Fenn because she felt he had defended Haughey,

She was icily civil. She acknowledged that I should go on telling the truth, but she said I should tell Mr. Haughey in the language that she had just used to me, what she thought of him. And then she got up and the interview was clearly at an end, and she hissed in my ear as I left the room: “Go back to Ireland where you belong”.

Fenn then had to tell Haughey what Thatcher said,

I carried out the Prime Minister’s instructions. Haughey was visibly shocked. I told him what she thought of him. I shan’t repeat it. And he said: “The Prime Minister has lost confidence in me”. I said: “Yes, Taoiseach”. “Confidence once lost cannot be restored”. “That’s a counsel of despair”. “The Irish have lived with despair for 800 years”. That was the flavour of this difficult passage in our relations with the Irish in 1988.¹⁷

Through the interim period from March 1988 to April 1990, it remains unknown what, if any, structures were put in place to recover relations between Thatcher and Haughey. In October 1988, the British Government introduced a broadcasting ban. The voices of members of Sinn Féin, the UDA and the PIRA, to name a few, were prohibited. This left the Thatcher Government open to more accusations of censorship, but Thatcher wrote that she believed the ban worked (even though journalists found a loophole and used actors voices for their reports).¹⁸ To her mind, the undesirables in Northern Ireland were silenced. From the available records we can see that both Haughey and Thatcher began to pay more attention to, and take more interest in, world affairs from 1989 onwards.

¹⁷ BDOHP, interview with Fenn, 2010 and *The Irish Times*, 24 July 2018.

¹⁸ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 412. For more on the broadcasting ban see Mary Corcoran and Mark O’Brien, *Political Censorship and the Democratic State: The Irish Broadcasting Ban* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005) and *The Media and Northern Ireland*, ed., by Bill Rolston, (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991).

‘Confidence once lost cannot be restored’: 1989-1990

Thatcher’s trip to Moscow in March 1987 saw her transform from a ‘suburban housewife’ to a ‘senior statesman of the Western World.’¹⁹ She also got along famously with Mikhail Gorbachev, the Secretary of the communist party.²⁰ Back in 1984 she told the BBC, ‘I like Mr. Gorbachev. We can do business together.’ She enjoyed the 1987 Moscow visit, and relations between the two only improved as they continued to visit each other.²¹ Her relationship with Reagan also continued to blossom as the pair worked on bringing the Cold War to a peaceful end.²² Meanwhile, Haughey also began to take an interest in global politics.

From January to July 1990, the Republic of Ireland held the Presidency of the CEU. This position gave Haughey the chance to rub shoulders with the European Heads of State in a way he had not been able to before. As Fenn surmised, ‘Haughey is enjoying his presidency role. His tour of capitals has given him an *entrée* to Heads of State and government which he has not previously enjoyed.’²³ Ireland’s presidency came at a time of enormous change for Europe. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 had spelt the end of the Cold War and of Communism in Europe.²⁴ Haughey relished his time at the helm of a changing world order. He underwent ‘a conversion to European political union’ and supported German unification.²⁵ There were also changes in Northern Ireland

Peter Brooke’s appointment as Secretary of State of Northern Ireland in July 1989 marked another shift in Thatcher’s Northern Ireland policy. King had failed to gain the affection or respect of either community in Northern Ireland.²⁶ Unionists especially disliked him as he presided over the years after the AIA. Ian Paisley referred to him as ‘Tomcat’

¹⁹ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 670.

²⁰ Mikhail Gorbachov, Soviet politician. Second Secretary of the communist Party of the Soviet Union 1984-1985, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 1985-1991, President of the Soviet Union 1990-1991.

²¹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, pp. 478-485, p. 792, p. 786 and pp. 805-806. See also Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two* for more on how relations between MT and Gorbachev grew. Gorbachev came to see MT in April 1989. MT visited Gorbachev in Sept. 1989 and MT had a final visit to Moscow as Prime Minister in June 1990.

²² See Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two* and John O’Sullivan, *The President, the Pope and the Prime Minister: Three Who Changed the World* (Washington: Regnery, 2006).

²³ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, Fenn 331 to Kerr, 17 Apr. 1990.

²⁴ For more on the end of the Cold War, see Saki Dockrill, *The End of the Cold War Era: The Transformation of the Global Security Order* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005).

²⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, Fenn 331 to Kerr, 17 Apr. 1990.

²⁶ Cochrane, *Unionist Politics*, chpt. 7.

King.²⁷ Three civilians from the Republic of Ireland were charged with attempting to assassinate King in October 1988.²⁸ Brooke, ‘a Tory of the old school,’ was a different character. Thatcher reflected that his ‘unflappable good humour’ made him an ideal Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.²⁹ But on taking the job, Thatcher asked him not to embark on any new ventures in Northern Ireland before the next UK general election.³⁰ Thatcher had won her last General Election in 1987. She wanted Brooke to stand pat until told otherwise. Relations between Dublin and London also slowed down.

In the final year of her premiership, Thatcher and Haughey met twice. These meetings occurred because Haughey was visiting members of the European Council in his capacity as President. From the documents in PREM 19/3403, we can see that the content of these meetings was wholly different from the Teapot Summit of 1980. Ahead of the first meeting in April, Haughey requested that any discussion of Anglo-Irish affairs be limited to ‘two or three sentences.’ Haughey wanted to talk about the April European Council meeting instead.³¹ London’s record of the meeting shows that Northern Ireland received ‘a few minutes’ attention. ‘It was a gentle, almost torpid, encounter.’ Many contemporaries, including John Major who would replace Thatcher as Prime Minister in November 1990, recalled that in the later years of her premiership Thatcher became more argumentative. It was her way of reaching a decision.³² But her relations with Haughey had cooled to the extent that she did not challenge him over security like she used to. There were no decisions to make with Haughey. She told Haughey that efforts were being made on Northern Ireland in London but did not expand on what they were. Haughey replied that he was ‘happy to leave it to the Northern Ireland Secretary to try to sort it all out.’³³ A similar approach was adopted at the final Haughey-Thatcher meeting in June.

²⁷ Jeremy Smith, *Making the Peace in Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 171.

²⁸ The three accused, Finbarr Cullen, John McCann and Martina Shanahan, were reportedly supporters of the PIRA but were not members. *The Irish Examiner*, *The Irish Press* and *The Irish Times*, 13 Oct. 1988.

²⁹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 414. See also Cochrane, *Unionist Politics and the Politics of Unionism*, chpt. 7 for more on Brooke’s personality.

³⁰ Emma Kilheaney, ‘Ministers Advise, Prime Minister’s Decide? Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and Policy Making During the Thatcher Years,’ PhD thesis, 2016, University of Manchester, Manchester, p. 199.

³¹ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, minute from Butler to Powell, 19 Apr. 1990.

³² Major, *The Autobiography*, pp. 84-85. See also Shepherd, *The Real Iron Lady* for more on Thatcher’s love of argument.

³³ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, letter from Powell to Gozney, 20 Apr. 1990.

Before the meeting, Gerry Collins and Brooke agreed that there would be no ‘substantive exchanges.’³⁴ The meeting was held over lunch and was a casual affair. From London’s record of the meeting, it appears that Haughey took the lead of the discussion,

Mr. Haughey whisked through the official business in record time, showing very little disposition to get into an argument. We had disposed of the European Council before the first course was served, and Anglo-Irish relations only a couple of mouthfuls into it. But we did have a very interesting time on the early Irish Saints, the state of Georgian houses in Ireland, the Prime Minister’s traveller’s tales from the Soviet Union, and the World Cup match between England and Ireland. I feel a bit of a sneak letting you know all this. But it would otherwise be difficult to explain the exiguous record ...³⁵

Haughey added that he appreciated Brooke’s effort to start talks with the Northern Ireland parties and that ‘The Republic was being as helpful as it could behind the scenes and trying to avoid saying anything which might appear insensitive.’³⁶ Although no record exists, Thatcher must have allowed Brooke to organise an all party (bar Sinn Féin) conference. Brooke wrote to Thatcher on 25 July to say that the talks would be delayed until Autumn 1990.³⁷ Four days later, the PIRA reminded Thatcher of the threat they posed.

Thatcher’s close friend and Northern Ireland advisor, Ian Gow, was assassinated by the PIRA outside his home in West Sussex. Northern Ireland was ‘Gow’s political passion’ and his resignation in protest of the AIA had distressed Thatcher in 1985.³⁸ Thatcher likened her reaction to Gow’s death to that of Airey Neave’s, ‘I experienced again something of that deep personal grief I had felt when Airey was killed.’³⁹ After Neave’s death in 1979 Thatcher started a dialogue with Dublin that she hoped would result in improved security cooperation. London’s next move on Northern Ireland was the opposite.

³⁴ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, letter from Pope to Powell, 12 June 1990.

³⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, letter from Powell to Wall, 13 June 1990.

³⁶ *iBid.*,

³⁷ TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, minute from Brooke to MT, 25 July 1990.

³⁸ *The Guardian*, 31 July 1990.

³⁹ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 414.

On 9 November, Brooke made a key speech on Northern Ireland. The content of the speech was as important as the timing. Brooke's speech was meant to 'focus the minds of nationalists and republicans, Irish politicians, Irish Americans and others on the real nature of that (British) presence.'⁴⁰ The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had 'no selfish strategic' in Northern Ireland. Should a majority vote for unity with the Republic of Ireland the UK would accept it.⁴¹ 'The message was not what the role was, rather than what it was misrepresented as being. In essence, it was to stand behind the consent principle, 'which left the ultimate destiny of Northern Ireland in the hands and votes of its own people.'⁴² As Patterson asserts, the end of the Cold War played a pivotal role in Brooke's speech. There was a new world order and other national liberation groups had opted for dialogue over violence.⁴³ John Chilcot, who served as Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from 1990-1997, said of the Whitbread speech, 'It was a useful message to convey to the Provisionals that we did not want to hang on to Northern Ireland for strategic reasons.'⁴⁴ Brooke's speech made a deep impact on the Republican movement and opened the way for talks between Sinn Féin and Downing Street.⁴⁵ 13 days after Brooke's speech, there was more change in store for the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

Thatcher's time as Prime Minister came to an end on 22 November 1990. Following Geoffrey Howe's damaging 'conflict of loyalty' resignation speech to the Commons on 13 November, Michael Heseltine launched a leadership challenge that Thatcher stood little chance of surviving.⁴⁶ Her colleagues in government were weary of her confrontational style of leadership. Heseltine wrote that Major's Government marked a change in atmosphere at No. 10, 'In contrast to the Thatcher years, everyone was allowed their say. Arguments were countered by reason and not interrupted or shouted down. Personal abuse and raised voices were never part of the currency.'⁴⁷ The Iron Lady's tenure was over and the Northern Ireland Peace Process moved on.

⁴⁰ Bloomfield, *Tragedy of Errors*, p. 69.

⁴¹ Dixon and O'Kane, *Northern Ireland Since 1969*, pp. 142-143.

⁴² Kenneth Bloomfield, 'The terrain of discourse,' in *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed. by Spencer, p. 31.

⁴³ Patterson, *Ireland Since 1939*, p. 322. Kelly also quotes Patterson in this context in *A Failed Political Entity*, p. 339.

⁴⁴ 'Negotiations and positions: an interview with Sir John Chilcot,' in *The British and Peace in Northern Ireland*, ed., by Spencer, p. 81.

⁴⁵ Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, p. 339.

⁴⁶ 'Personal Statement,' Commons sitting of 13 Nov. 1990, Hansard HC [431-556] cc. 461-465.

⁴⁷ Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle*, p. 488.

Conclusion

Irish attention to Anglo-Irish relations was obsessive and constant. British attention was fitful and occasional: we tended only to notice them when they got up and hit us, which is maybe why they hit us so often.¹

The overarching question this thesis sought to answer was why did Thatcher's Northern Ireland policy alter over her eleven-year tenure? She changed from referring to Northern Ireland as 'as British as Finchley' in 1981 to announcing through Peter Brooke that the UK had 'no selfish strategic interest' in the province in 1990.² This thesis has followed Thatcher's Northern Ireland policy by looking closely at newly released documents from the Prime Minister's Office, the Northern Ireland Office, the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Through this, the research question expanded with several sub-questions.

First, how did Thatcher's Northern Ireland policy alter as the government of the Republic of Ireland was passed between Fianna Fáil, under Charles Haughey, and Fine Gael, under Garret FitzGerald. Anglo-Irish relations had gotten off to a rocky start when Thatcher met with Jack Lynch. Lynch was tired, disgruntled and had little interest in Northern Ireland. Thatcher 'concluded there was nothing doing with (Lynch).'³ Lynch's successor, Haughey, had a different approach. He 'set out to charm' Thatcher, and initially this tactic worked.⁴ The Teapot Summit of June 1980 set the tone for the first few months of the Thatcher-Haughey dynamic. Relations remained friendly until Brian Lenihan told the press that Anglo-Irish relations had developed so well that there would be a united Ireland within ten years.⁵ Thatcher was incensed. First-hand accounts tell us that she 'tore into Haughey' in a tirade that lasted half an hour.⁶ Haughey made more mistakes, most notably his u-turn over sanctions against Argentina during the Falklands War. Although Thatcher viewed Haughey

¹ BDOHP, interview with Nicholas Fenn, 2010.

² 'Anglo-Irish Bilateral Talks,' Commons sitting of 10 Nov. 1981, Hansard HC [403-516] cc. 421-428 and Dixon and O'Kane, *Northern Ireland*, pp. 142-143.

³ Bernard Ingham interviewed for 'Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,' RTÉ, 2013.

⁴ Walter Kirwan interviewed for 'Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,' RTÉ, 2013.

⁵ TNA UK, PREM 19/508, Figg 76 to FCO, 23 Mar. 1981.

⁶ Martin Mansergh interviewed for 'Margaret Thatcher: Ireland and the Iron Lady,' RTÉ, 2013.

with suspicion, she continued to go along with the Anglo-Irish process in line with the advice of her Ministers.

In 1984, negotiations between Dublin and London became formalised through the Armstrong-Nally group. This allowed Thatcher to talk to Dublin indirectly without the press attention Anglo-Irish elite summits usually warranted. The end result of this process was the 1985 AIA. Thatcher had been convinced by the Armstrong team that this Agreement was the next logical move for Northern Ireland, but her misgivings were confirmed when Ian Gow resigned in protest on the morning of the signing. She expected the AIA to be like ‘waving a magic wand,’ but the AIA failed to gain the security cooperation with the Republic of Ireland that Thatcher wanted.⁷ This led to the next research theme. How the AIA impacted Thatcher’s attitude to Northern Ireland.

Her disappointment at the lack of security cooperation was compounded by the increase of paramilitary activity after 1985. Thatcher reluctantly signed the AIA because she believed security cooperation between the Republic of Ireland and the UK would improve. Thatcher had been convinced by her friend and shadow Northern Ireland advisor, Airey Neave, that the Northern Ireland problem was a military one. The AIA formalised diplomacy between Dublin and London but resulted in a series of protests by the unionist alliance in Northern Ireland. FitzGerald had said in 1986 that it was time for the Republic of Ireland to sign the ECST as most other European countries already had. He instead tried to use the treaty as a bargaining tool to get concessions on the Courts System in Northern Ireland. When FitzGerald left the Taoiseach’s office for the final time in March 1987, the ECST had not been ratified by the Dáil. Haughey’s decision to stall the process led Thatcher to conclude that the Republic of Ireland would conduct ‘gesture politics.’⁸ After the Enniskillen bomb, the Dáil ratified the ECST, but Haughey’s caveat that all extradition cases had to be made to and approved by the Irish Attorney General enraged Thatcher. Arthur described how Anglo-Irish relations moved through two stages from 1979 to 1990; a military response due to

⁷ Seán Donlon, interviewed for ‘Thatcher and the IRA: Dealing with terror,’ BBC, 2014.

⁸ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 407.

violence followed by diplomacy.⁹ This thesis expands on Arthur's theory by introducing a third stage to cover the final years of Thatcher's premiership; disengagement.

Although the documentation for the years 1988 to 1990 has not been fully released, we can see from the available documents that Anglo-Irish relations took a back seat as Haughey and Thatcher turned their attention to world affairs. From the available documents we now know that when Thatcher and Haughey met in 1990, Northern Ireland was side-lined from the main discussion as both parties focused more on remaining friendly. This goes some way to explaining why Brooke made the 'no selfish strategic interest' speech in the last few weeks of Thatcher's time in office. Thatcher's government had shifted from protecting Northern Ireland to feeling bewildered by its politics, people and paramilitaries. Thatcher had tried to engage with Dublin and Northern Ireland politicians to little avail. In order to fully understand the Whitbread speech, this thesis also explored the impact of personality on elite relationships.

Although Thatcher signed the AIA with FitzGerald, in her autobiography she was rather unkind towards him. She labelled him a 'cosmopolitan intellectual, more sensitive to imagined snubs and more inclined to exaggerate the importance of essentially trivial issues.'¹⁰ Remarkably Thatcher, according to her own account, was more comfortable with Haughey. This is in spite of the fact that she had fallen out with Haughey on three occasions; once in December 1980 after the Throne Room summit; then during the Falklands War; and after Dublin ratified the ECST in 1987. In 1984 Thatcher handed over the responsibility of talking to Dublin to a team headed by Robert Armstrong. This challenges the idea that Thatcher was an autocratic leader with a black and white cognitive style.¹¹ In the Anglo-Irish arena, Thatcher could be pragmatic. She did not want to sign the AIA, as illustrated by her 'out out out' burst and especially after Gow resigned in protest on the morning of the signing, but she was convinced that it was the next logical step. This gives credence to Moore's summation that Thatcher was willing 'to permit others to do things of which she in theory

⁹ Arthur, *Special Relationships*.

¹⁰ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 393.

¹¹ Dyson, 'Cognitive Style and Foreign Policy,' pp. 33-48.

disapproved.¹² Yet her handwriting over an offer for the 1981 Hunger Strikers suggests that Thatcher was a more nuanced leader than has hitherto been appreciated.¹³

This thesis also suggests that Thatcher was engaged with the Northern Ireland issue up and until her ‘out ... out ... out ...’ speech in November 1984. The fact that she had made a mistake caused Thatcher’s team deep embarrassment. She in turn ‘pretended not to understand what the fuss was about.’¹⁴ Following this, Thatcher offered to conduct more Anglo-Irish summits in place of an actual apology to FitzGerald. She sidestepped her own misgivings about the AIA but continued to regret it. In the years succeeding the AIA Thatcher’s uncertainty was confirmed to her as paramilitary activity from both sides of the divide escalated. This led her to take her anger out on Haughey and Nicholas Fenn in 1987 and 1988. In 1987 Thatcher began to consider her position as a world leader and transformed into a ‘statesman’ during her 1987 visit to Moscow.¹⁵ Haughey, in turn, wanted to stay in the Taoiseach’s office for as long as possible. His position as President of the CEU gave him the chance to act as a world leader, a role he relished. Surprisingly, and in contradiction with Kelly’s hypothesis that ‘... Ulster ... always remained close to (Haughey’s) heart,’ for their meeting in April 1990 Haughey requested that any discussion of Anglo-Irish affairs be limited to ‘two or three sentences.’¹⁶ By the time Thatcher left Downing Street both she and Haughey had turned their attention to global politics.

This thesis has also attempted to follow Anglo-Irish relations using records from the archives in Dublin and London. Previous works have focused on records either from Dublin (Stephen Kelly) or London (Charles Moore). This thesis offers a dual view of relations between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. It also introduces an interesting look into how records of meetings and verbatim accounts differed between London and Dublin. How one side interpreted conversation allows us to explore the priorities of each side in a more detailed way than has hitherto been possible.

¹² Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. 2*, p. 318.

¹³ TNA UK, PREM 19/506, letter from Whitmore to Boys-Smith, 8 July 1981.

¹⁴ Aitken, *Thatcher*, p. 418.

¹⁵ Moore, *Thatcher: Vol. Two*, p. 670.

¹⁶ Kelly, *Failed Political Entity*, p. 25 and TNA UK, PREM 19/3403, minute from Butler to Powell, 19 Apr. 1990.

This thesis has expanded on the current literature by using newly released documentation from the archives covering the years 1979 to 1990. However, due to concerns with international relations and security, the PREM files covering the years 1988 to 1990 are still withheld by the Cabinet Office. Records from the Department of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs in Dublin will continue to be released under the 30-year rule over the next three years. Individual documents contained in the released files from both Dublin and London are withheld, or certain pieces of information have been redacted. If these records and pieces of information are made available to the public, there will be further opportunity to expand on the period this work has covered.

The overarching research question has been answered. The Thatcher government's Northern Ireland policy changed due to a number of factors, namely Thatcher's own disappointment with security cooperation and continued paramilitary activity. Thatcher concluded her chapter on Northern Ireland in her autobiography with a reflection that it was 'surely time to consider an alternative approach' to the province.¹⁷ Her eleven years in the Prime Minister's Office did not result in a solution to the Northern Ireland problem. But the work of Thatcher and her selected team laid the groundwork for the 1993 Downing Street Declaration and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. This is often disputed in the existing historiography. Thatcher herself reflected that the AIA failed to gain her the security cooperation she wanted, while Adams, in an article published after her death, lambasted Thatcher's policies and accused her of making 'the North of Ireland a more bitterly divided place.'¹⁸ Dixon and O'Kane, meanwhile, agree that although the long-term impact of the AIA was not what Thatcher wanted, the Agreement changed the political arena in Northern Ireland and was 'important in creating the conditions under which the peace process was to emerge in the early 1990s.'¹⁹ Thatcher has also been treated as a hero (Robin Harris's 2013 work *Not for Turning* is a celebration of Thatcherism) or a villain (in his two works on Thatcher, *The Grocer's Daughter* and *The Iron Lady*, John Campbell is barely able to hide his contempt for Thatcher's policies). The aim of this work has been to present a factual account of the Thatcher Government's Northern Ireland policy.

¹⁷ Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 415.

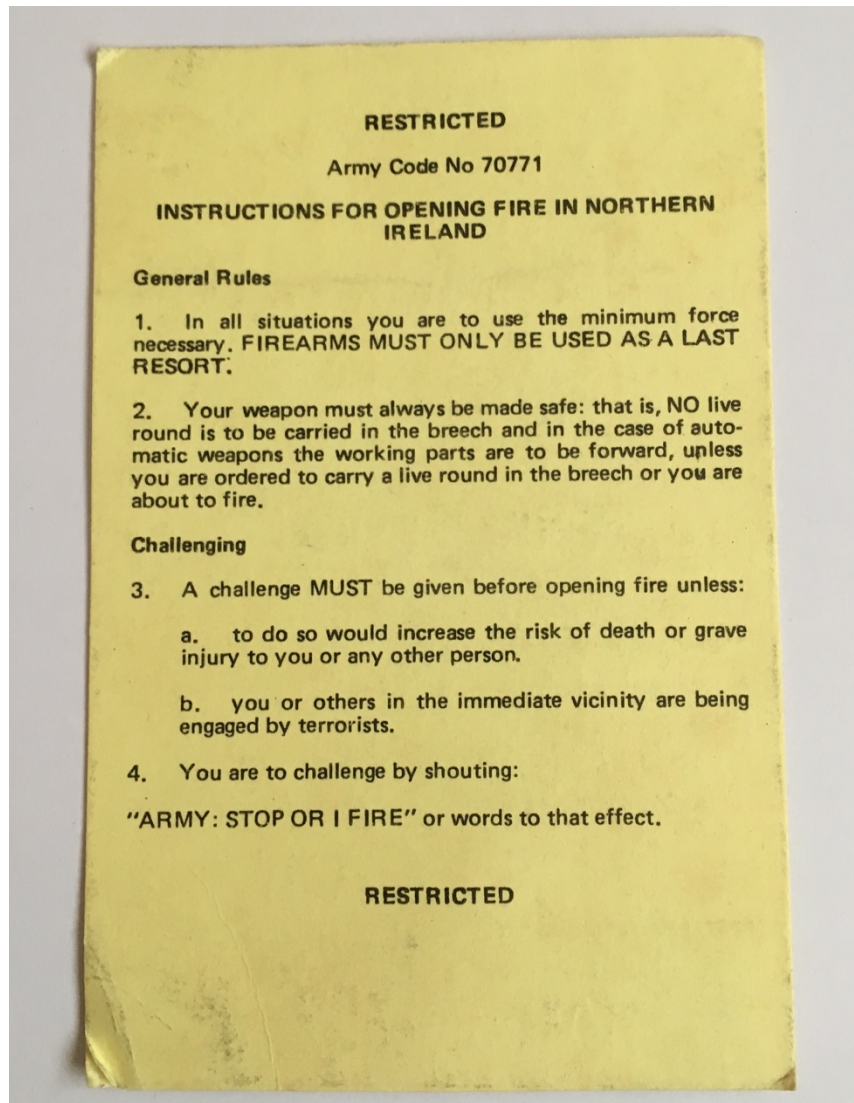
¹⁸ *i*Bid., p. 415, *The Guardian*, 9 Apr. 2013.

¹⁹ Dixon and O'Kane, *Northern Ireland Since 1969*, p. 64.

What this work discovers is that although Thatcher wanted to portray herself as the Iron Lady of Great Britain, when it came to Northern Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations she discovered she was out of her depth. Her basic grasp of the Northern Ireland problem came from Neave. Northern Ireland was a security problem and therefore needed a military-based solution. The key to achieving this was closer cooperation with, and gaining security concessions from, the Republic of Ireland. Both her own Northern Ireland advisors their counterparts in Dublin, and her own counterpart the Taoiseach, especially Garret FitzGerald, were determined to educate her on other solutions to the Northern Ireland problem. Yet, as this thesis shows, even after the AIA Thatcher was unable to consider any other course of action. This is not to say she was ignorant, on the contrary she was incredibly sharp and she did attempt to read up on the history of Ireland. Her extensive annotations and notes contained within the PREM files proves this. But there were also other international issues which commanded her interest and attention. Things may have been different if FitzGerald had stayed on as Taoiseach into the late 1980s, but the return of Haughey sealed Thatcher's disengagement from Northern Ireland.

Appendix 1

Images of a Yellow Card Gifted to the Author



RESTRICTED**Opening Fire****5. You may only open fire against a person:**

a. if he* is committing or about to commit an act **LIKELY TO ENDANGER LIFE, AND THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO PREVENT THE DANGER.** The following are some examples of acts where life could be endangered, dependent always upon the circumstances:

- (1) firing or being about to fire a weapon.
- (2) planting, detonating or throwing an explosive device (including a petrol bomb).
- (3) deliberately driving a vehicle at a person and there is no other way of stopping him*.

b. if you know that he* has just killed or injured any person by such means and he* does not surrender if challenged and **THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO MAKE AN ARREST.**

*"She" can be read instead of "he" if applicable.

6. If you have to open fire you should:

- a. fire only aimed shots,
- b. fire no more rounds than are necessary,
- c. take all reasonable precautions not to injure any one other than your target.

RESTRICTED**1.1.81**

PP1/21271/11/80/BF

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